# THE BOOKMAN

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## WHEN THE JAPS BELEAGUERED MANHATTAN

*by Joseph J. Reilly*

Within three hundred days after the propagandists of "peace at any price" succeeded in making America defenceless the thing happened. Under heir Lord High Admiral Toka-Ho-i the aps assembled their fleet off the coast of outhern California, on the pretence of perorming essential naval manouevres, and, unxpectedly heading south, defiled through the anama Canal. Then, like a flock of hawks, hey swept up along the Atlantic littoral and ottled up Manhattan with a swift dexterity vhich sent the terrified government at Washngton scuttling to Cincinnati for safety. he Japs' decisive and undreamed-of descent vas perfectly timed. It occurred at the very ioment when the leading American novelsts were attending a convention at the Alonquin Hotel.

Once the invaders had girdled Manhattan /ith warships (each, cold and still, watching ie island like a gigantic cat eying a mouse), ieir Ultimatum was delivered. It proved, as ll the world knew, that the Japs lacked either humour, subtlety, nor a conception f art. By its terms they promised the Borough President to spare the tight little island from the Battery to the Bronx on one condition: that the five most highly regarded American novelists should be surrendered to the besiegers, one each week, their final fate to be shrouded in impenetrable mystery.

Of course such a vicarious sacrifice was not declined and the Borough President—aware of the popular faith in dictators—promptly appointed an Arbiter Elegantiae to solve the two momentous problems: Who were the Big Five? and In what order should they be surrendered to the Japs—and everlasting silence?

The Arbiter, though himself entrusted with dictatorial powers, had a lingering interest in the democratic tradition. He caused ballots to be distributed to every subway passenger through Times Square between 8:30 and 9:30 in the morning on the question of the Big Five and announced their choice by radio at high noon on the following day. As a second democratic gesture he broadcasted at midnight each Sunday the name of the novelist who was to be surrendered at dawn, together with the reasons governing his choice.



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When the ballots were counted the names of some eighty novelists appeared but of the Big Five there was no serious question. In slow and measured tones the Arbiter announced them. They were, in alphabetical order, Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Edith Wharton, and Thornton Wilder.

When Sunday came popular interest in the Arbiter's first decision was so intense that the crowds which had been watching the fireworks display from the Japanese warships hurried home at the approach of midnight to tune in. At the appointed moment the Arbiter's voice—admirably controlled despite his emotion—broke the silence:

"Fellow Manhattanites and sympathetic friends in the outside world! Through countless channels of communication you are aware of the crisis which confronts this island and of the momentous decisions which I as Arbiter Elegantiae am called upon to make. Distasteful as this task is, I am facing it as a patriotic duty." (Here the speaker drew his breath in sharply.) "After days of earnest consideration I am about to yield to our foes the novelist among our Big Five whom we in our struggle for culture and the fulfilment of our ideals of art can most easily spare.

"A novelist may have a passion for facts, seek them far and wide, toil to weave them into the semblance of truth and yet fail because, lacking imagination, he fails to understand that truth is more than the total of facts however numerous or meticulously gathered.

"Again: sex has, of course, an immensely important place in life. But to suppose that the implications of the term are merely biological is a bourgeois error which is ruinous to art because contrary to truth. To insist that sex in this narrow sense dominates the minds and conduct of men and women is to commit a further blunder which cannot be concealed by a mantle of science woven from the terminology of Darwin and Spencer.

"A novelist devoid of imagination and convinced that his fellows are obsessed by sex is certain to commit grave blunders, especially if he persuades himself that the sex impulse is a law unto itself. His next step is inevitably to conceive of every human being as the embodiment of a single dominating instinct and to reduce conduct to a formula. Thus we are told that the 'male' craves to possess, that the 'female' yearns to be possessed. He calls, she answers, in obedience to a dim, primal law, just as their 'simian ancestors' called and answered in obedience to a dim, primal law in the paleozoic age.

"How simple, how easy, and how crude! The fact that psychologically men and women are the most sensitive and highly complicated organisms in the world is ignored. The infinite forces that spring from civilization, convention, and religion and to which men and women are responsive and which underlie their inhibitions are swept aside. We are asked to believe that at a word, a glance, a touch, these vanish and the jungle and its code take their place. Therein, says our novelist, nature is revealed, fulfilled, and justified. To defend, to excuse, would be like defending or excusing the pulsations of the heart. It is simple, natural, universal, amoral!

"Time presses and my comment must be brief. It is this: Life with its infinite complexities, its baffling contradictions, its amazing abnegations laughs at a conception so elemental, and everything in man that rises above the ape and the tiger gives it the lie.

"It is not because of his verbosity, his stylistic *gaucheries*, his adoration of heroes merely bovine, but because he allows his private nightmare to destroy an adequate representation of life that I surrender Theodore Dreiser to the common enemy."

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During the succeeding week the Arbiter was invisible. The rumour got abroad that the Association of Contaminated Bell-hops had issued a protest against the surrender of Mr. Dreiser, but it went unconfirmed. Meanwhile the city's only newspaper, *The Limit* (the offspring of several mergers and celebrated for its slogan "No news that's fit to print"), notified the public that all letters of protest or advice went unread into the Arbiter's waste basket.

On the second Sunday night general interest had mounted so high that when the Arbiter went on the air the streets were deserted.

"To have ideals is to court disillusionment. To suffer disillusionment goads the idealist to seek revenge on the individuals, the class, or the social structure which he holds responsible for shattering his ideals. If the sufferer is inarticulate, his attacks prove abortive; if he is a writer he may make them count; if he is a novelist of talent they may go deep. That is especially true if he resorts to satire and brings to the attack vigour, power of characterization, and an instinct for such vulnerabilities as meanness, inefficiency, and vulgarity.

"The world likes good satire and will read it provided it is vivid, perfectly obvious, and dinned into its ears by the roaring batteries of modern advertising. The satirist scores a kind of *succès de scandale*; let him repeat it and he achieves celebrity. He becomes a vogue, and he may give a phrase or a word to his native speech or a character to its literature. Will such roots strike deep? Is this more than an ironic promise of enduringness certain to be cancelled—a mocking gesture of fate pointing towards Oblivion?

"The novelist who makes satire his forte runs certain risks. Success tempts him to forget that a novel is primarily a reflex of life and to foist upon it an alien and disastrous rôle: he loads it with a thesis and supplants the high arts of narration and drama with the pedestrian art of exposition. As Cervantes, Molière, and Thackeray knew, it is suicidal to force art to become the handmaid of social satire.

"There is another danger which goes deeper—the danger of seeking so diligently for what is petty, mean, vulgar, and hypocritical in human nature that the eye is blinded to compensating virtues, to pity, hope, and kindness, and to that divine thing, laughter. Cervantes, Molière, and Thackeray escaped that error because they were great artists and great souls. They were always the masters, never the victims of satire.

"Our descendants will have short memories. They will feel no respect for us or our idols, and the contempt with which we brand our grandfathers is earnest of the derision with which our grandchildren will speak of us. Were these thy gods, O Israel? Popularity of itself, however it may tickle an author's vanity or fill his purse, has little significance; more often than not it implies neither worth nor lastingness.

"It is because of his abdication of the primary business of the novelist, because of his essential narrowness of vision and lack of human sympathy and despite his fame that I surrender Sinclair Lewis to the enemy."

As the week wore on interest in the Arbiter's next decision steadily mounted. It was whispered that a protest from the Nobel Prize Committee had been intercepted by the enemy radio director. Persistent rumours that the Arbiter had resigned (unconfirmed from day to day) were set at rest when, at midnight on the third Sunday, his voice was heard on the radio, slightly tremulous but not lacking in precision:

"To take the public by storm with what is

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virtually a first book provides a new novelist with a triumph and a challenge. If that challenge is not met with a novel which equals or betters the first, the newly acquired prestige is certain to suffer. You may call that unfair but the fact remains.

"It is a glory for any writer to produce a novel so delicately ironic in flavour, so fresh in local colour, so sharply etched in its characterization, so perfect in style, and so thought-provoking withal that almost overnight it becomes a classic, acknowledged by the discriminating few, acclaimed by the delighted many.

"We have waited for its peer from the same hand. We have been presented with a novelette not lacking in distinction but unmarked by outstanding talent. It is impossible, alas, to wait longer! Whether other masterpieces might have followed we shall never know. The chances, weighed in the light of literary history, are indecisive. Meanwhile the Great Chance has come and—thanks to our besiegers—has gone. It is with deep reluctance and only after steeling myself against the certain accusation of injustice that I surrender Thornton Wilder to the enemy."

The most extravagant tales were current during the hectic days that followed and the charge was made in certain quarters that it was the Arbiter's chivalry rather than his critical judgment which had reserved the two women novelists to the last. He was, however, absolved in a set of spirited resolutions adopted by the Federated Women's Clubs of the beleaguered island.

At first the general excitement of the previous weeks diminished but reacted sharply on Thursday, and by Sunday was almost unendurable. This feeling was reflected in the Arbiter's voice when he began to speak, but it grew more assured as he proceeded:

"It is possible to write much and over a considerable period of years, and always with distinction of style and manner, and with exquisite care, and precision, and taste. That truth is exemplified in our two remaining novelists. Both began as devotees of other writers, in the one case of Henry James, in the other, of Sarah Orne Jewett. Each grew away to an independent and firmly-rooted life of her own. There is over a decade's difference between their ages and virtually the same difference between their first publications in fiction. Both have won popular recognition on the one hand and the admiration of the appreciative few on the other. Both are artists of a high order; the literary conscience in their every work has reinforced skill.

"Both have studied men and women of varied types, interests, and origins. One is chiefly identified with the foregathering places of the cultured and wealthy, the other with the great open spaces of the American middle border; one with human nature in its conventions and complexities, the other with human nature in its simple and more elemental forms, usually among immigrants sternly at grips with an unyielding soil. Both have studied human passion in its many revelations and always with reverence, finding in the very difficulties of their themes a challenge to tact and artistry.

"But I must return to the task of differentiating further between our two novelists. Mrs. Wharton is the abler constructionist. Her sense of form rises superior to such tales as *One of Ours* and *The Professor's House*. On the other hand her sympathies are neither so broad nor so deep as those of Willa Cather who in her impressionable girlhood gained an understanding of the exiles from central and southeastern Europe which she never lost. As a child she sensed their spirit beneath their stolidity and inarticulateness, and ached with pity for the defeat which so often ended

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their struggles against a hostile fate. Too often Mrs. Wharton, carrying French objectivity of treatment to a confused issue, is so obviously out of sympathy with her characters that her attitude takes on the semblance of a conscious—and irritating—superiority.

"Of the limitations of sympathy implied in this attitude she is free in one striking instance. In length *Ethan Frome* is a novelette; in form it is virtually perfect. In the stark simplicity of its setting, in the rise and fall of its action, in the relentless tightening of the coils of tragedy about its chief characters, and in the overwhelming irony of its conclusion it is above criticism. It deserves a place among the finest pieces of fiction yet produced by any American.

"Miss Cather has also essayed this briefer form and although she has achieved *A Lost Lady* she has in neither short nor long fiction produced a masterpiece to rival *Ethan Frome*. Two of her gifts however require particular attention: she is a poet of parts who carries warmth as well as rhythm into her prose and a sense of the tears of things into her interpretation of life. She has abundant vitality, so abundant indeed that it pulses through the veins of her men and women and invests her novels with the illusion of life. This is her greatest gift, her ultimate distinction.

"But time presses; my decision must be made. I think of Mrs. Wharton as some rare diamond, fit for a prince's bride, polished, sparkling, alive in countless points of light and colour. I think of Miss Cather as a pearl of great price, more soft in contour, drawing delicate tints of violet and rose into its heart, and melting and transfusing them there into a new and mysterious beauty, not commanding the eye like the diamond but alluring to it, holding it as with a caress.

"Mrs. Wharton is the more perfect artist; Miss Cather the greater genius. Mrs. Wharton's work has been a perfect reflex of her gifts; Miss Cather's gifts are greater than any expression of them she has yet achieved. To Mrs. Wharton belongs one unchallenged masterpiece; to Miss Cather belongs—the future. On that high thought (which hovers between a hope and a conviction) my decision—the most difficult by far I have had to make—had finally to hinge. It is with infinite and personal regret I say it: I surrender Edith Wharton to the common enemy."

The Arbiter's decision was met by bitter denunciation in some quarters and by extravagant approval in others. Philosophically-minded citizens deprecated criticism as purely academic in view of the brevity of Miss Cather's reprieve. Meanwhile the Algonquin, by permission of the Japanese High Admiral, was draped in black.

On Sunday at midnight every instrument on the island was tuned in for the Arbiter's final comments. The tense moments dragged slowly by. No word came. Suddenly out of the silence a voice was heard, obviously labouring under deep emotion. "Fellow citizens of Manhattan," it said, "I must announce a ghastly tragedy. The Arbiter Elegantiae is no more. Under the awful strain of the past month his mind gave way. By his dead body we have found this note, his last word: 'To all who love literature as a great art and cling to their dream of an American culture: I have reached the limit of my endurance. I refuse to give up Willa Cather to the enemy. . . . These Japanese are devils. They seek to destroy us, but our souls first. Otherwise I should exhort you to secure Miss Cather's safety even at the sacrifice of our beloved island. I secretly made our foes that offer. They refused it with contempt. I can do no more except to make a gesture of protest to the civilized world. This I am about to do: I am committing hara-kiri. Farewell.'"

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# THE ORDEAL OF VACHEL LINDSAY

## A CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

*by Henry Morton Robinson*

In the autumn of 1909 a curious booklet appeared in Springfield, Illinois. It was entitled *The Tramp's Excuse*, and the author—a thirty-year-old art student just returning from New York to his native town—went broke publishing it. But no matter; he was to go broke many times publishing just such pamphlets and he did not lack courage to begin. The innocent nudes in *The Tramp's Excuse* shocked the town and caused the author to lose his job as art lecturer in the local Y. M .C. A. But again, no matter. For Vachel Lindsay, author and illustrator of the little volume, had set down as its frontispiece the chart of his being, a pen and ink drawing entitled "A Map of the Universe".

Fifteen years later he wrote in the foreword to his *Collected Poems*: "The Map has dominated all my verses".

The "Map" is a bizarre and fantastic jumble of *Edda* symbolism, Egyptian design, and Swedenborgian mysticism, difficult to describe and impossible to understand. It depicts Heaven and Earth and the vast interstellar spaces crowded with symbols that must have had special meanings to Lindsay, meanings that even he could not wholly grasp or interpret either by verbal or graphic means. Commenting on one of the symbols, the Amaranth Vine, he says: "Under the walls of Heaven we see the Amaranth Vine growing from Earth to Heaven. This is but a diagram of the Vine, not a picture. The picture it is impossible to draw. None of the pictures are possible to draw". As with the Amaranth Vine, so with the Tomb of Lucifer, the Spider of Mammon, and the Tree of Laughing Bells,—vague symbols all, symbols of something that Lindsay never made quite clear to himself or anyone else.

The total effect of the "Map" is one of undigested fantasy, devoid of graphic or metaphysical unity, possessing none of the dark madness of Blake, but suggesting instead that the artist had a double touch of puerility: first, to compose such a drawing and second, to lay such prodigious store by it. And yet Lindsay speaks of this Map in every sentence of his discourse, places it at the head of his *Collected Works*, and exhorts us to bear it constantly in mind while reading his verses. Such emphasis must not be allowed to pass unregarded. Quite probably the Map is the clue to the poet's recurrent protest, uttered before a thousand audiences "I don't want to recite *The Congo*; you can recite it as well as I can. I don't want to recite *General Booth Enters into Heaven*. I want to talk about the Queen of Bubbles, the Amaranth Vine, and the Twenty-Six Panels of the Village Improvement Parade". Of course he always *did* go on and chant *The Congo* and *General Booth*, and then let off his *Kallyope Yell* with all the amazing effects of his loud and marvellous voice. For these performances he was justly famous; but them he will be remembered in the heart of grateful hearers. But during the last fifteen



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years of his life his early poems irked and thwarted him terribly, and if we are to understand his growing irritation with audiences that demanded them, we must heed the poet's advice and scrutinize more carefully his hieroglyphic Map of the Universe.

It will reveal to us a truth about Vachel Lindsay that is not to be found in facile summaries of his hoboing experiences, his picturesque roadside recitals, or his later successes on the lecture platform. Like Mark Twain, Lindsay went through an ordeal which he himself helped to create and foster, yet which at the same time he dreaded and despised. Audiences expected Mark Twain to be comical when he desired above all things to be speculatively philosophic. Similarly, American audiences begged Vachel Lindsay to electrify them with his delivery of *The Santa Fé Trail* when he himself wanted to discourse upon his Map of the Universe and how it all tied up with Egyptian hieroglyphics and Springfield City Hall. Naturally there was a polite but determined lack of interest in the audience when Lindsay began to unreel his mystical cosmology, and I cannot help feeling that this lack of interest was quite justified. On these matters Lindsay was dull, unimpressive; but when he got down to the business of declaiming his own poetry he was dynamic and unforgettable. I once heard him expound some of his Egyptian lore to a group of writers and teachers at Columbia University. At 9 p.m. Lindsay began his exegesis of the hieroglyphic Map; at 10.30 he was still droning on—but to a roomful of empty chairs. Unable to support the weight of his discourse, two-thirds of the audience had slunk out for a smoke. But when they heard the first "boomlay" beats of *The Congo* they rushed back to listen, applaud, and clamour for more. Swedenborg, Confucius and Thoth they could get elsewhere; what they wanted from Lindsay was the good old Mumbo-Jumbo, Sizz-Fizz, and Boomlay-BOOM.

Since humour was not a part of Vachel Lindsay's make-up, he was unable to be good-tempered about this thrice-evident truth. He grew progressively sourer with his audiences, and could not bring himself to realize that they had paid their money to hear a great modern jongleur thump out his own syncopated rhythms. He refused to see that America had made a myth of him, based on its first vision of the tawny-haired young poet springing full-grown from the Chicago movement of 1912. At first he could not realize that his best work and his best manner were irrevocably hurled forth in that year. No man likes to believe that his great days are behind him. He may fear it, and unconsciously resent it. But admit it? Never! He may even attempt a new synthesis, but usually the earlier mould has set, and the public will not let him break it. Unless he is a major force, capable of limitless expansion (and after 1915 Lindsay was not a highly-energized poet), he is hearsed in a tight category and swathed in cerements of his own winding.

This, I believe, was Vachel Lindsay's tragedy: As a fairly young man he made a reputation for himself by declaiming his highly-accented and dramatically original poems; as time passed he grew tired of these poems (imagine the monotony of reciting *The Congo* five thousand times!) and naturally wished to write something better. But he was unable to write anything better, and even if he had been, it is doubtful that his audience would have listened to it. And so he found himself approaching fifty, and passing it, obliged to do the same thing that he had done twenty years ago, but without freshness or savour now—no longer a poet of promise, no longer a poet at all—merely a

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touring performer compelled to revive for hire the painful memories of his poetic youth. No wonder he sought refuge in hieroglyphic mysticism!

## II

Vachel Lindsay was a poet with a physical pulse of rhythm swelling like a life-tide within him. He was a *pulse*, and a pulse exclusively. He could not think profoundly or connectedly, and the emotional range of his poetry is limited to a few notes. As long as he could translate his poetic impulses into almost purely rhythmical terms he was regarded, and rightly, as one of the leaders of the new poetry. Before Lindsay's voice was heard, the pulse of American poetry beating through the scholarly arteries of Clarence Stedman and George Edward Woodberry, was thin and fluttery. Lindsay supplied an elastic bass-drum heart that sent it tumbling along its courses with new vigour. Poems like *The Golden Whales of California* and *The Booker Washington Trilogy* were like strong meat to readers dieted on the fragile cates of Hovey and Le Gallienne. Lindsay's violent rhythms gave a fillip to any subject matter, especially when volleyed forth double-forte by a powerful young man with golden hair and a crusader's magnetism in his throat. More than any poet of his day Lindsay kindled in the public a desire to hear poetry uttered by its maker; he excelled all his contemporaries—Amy Lowell, Alfred Kreymborg, Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg (compelling personalities all)—in the art of putting a poem across. In fact he put his poems across so convincingly that those who heard him cannot tell to this day whether it was the poetry or the delivery that was touched by greatness.

Then, after a period of elocutionary success, came the necessity of going on. But for Lindsay there was no place to go. His characteristic poems were already written; his emotions had not deepened; and his intellect, never profound or penetrating, was unable to plunge beneath the rippling muscle-sheath of rhythm that, for him, overlay reality. Meanwhile his critical environment was the reverse of stimulating; was he not one of Miss Monroe's poets, and could *they* do wrong? Not, at any rate, in Springfield or Chicago. Acclamation had done its work with such unfortunate results that Lindsay began to feel that whatever he sang or said was a glowing fragment of the *Logos*. Moreover, he had by this time acquired a pose that, for a while at least, was very pleasant to assume—the pose of a lusty jongleur-vagabond with a kind of picaresque tramping-on-life philosophy that has ruined better poets than Harry Kemp.

Into this situation, already fatal to poetic expansion, stalked the blight of Lindsay's strange tendencies towards hieroglyphia, a malady which in Lindsay's case closely resembled automatic writing. With his imagination depleted and his store of poetic energy uncomfortably low, Lindsay fell back upon fantasy, civic virtue, and the graphic arts—a trilogy that led him far from the paths of poetry in his declining years. He would take a pen and make scrolls such as one might make while holding a telephone receiver; the hieroglyphics thus produced were highly valued by him, both as drawings and as the graphic incubators of his verse. Speaking of his creative impulsion, he says: "I begin with hieroglyphic, the minute cell of our thoughts the very definite alphabet with which we are to spell out our great new vision". Doubtless he stimulated his own creative impulse by tracing these hieroglyphs, and to this extent they serve a legitimate and valid purpose in his life. No one cares what a poe

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does as long as he produces poetry. He may affect intimacies with Buddha, Mencius, and Henry George—and while he is throwing off poems like *The Chinese Nightingale* and *The Golden Whales* he is immune from the petty darts of criticism. It is only when his work becomes attenuated, or hag-ridden by some semi-mystic theory that critics have a right to lament. And so I lament now that Vachel Lindsay, who in his towering prime was a signal-blaze to American poetry, spent the last fifteen years of his life in the service of hieroglyphic nonsense, arguing with audiences that his poems should be drawn, and danced, but never sung; lecturing in a very special jargon upon his hieroglyphic sketches of the Sun and Moon; and descanting always upon the interrelations of sign-writing and the millennium. If you want an adventure in jargonese, read Lindsay's own preface to his *Collected Works*. It is a pitifully rambling piece of prose containing not a word about the poems on which his fame rests—poems that he could not duplicate or even approach during the last years of his life. The Preface suggests, better than anything else, the ordeal through which the poet passed during those years—an ordeal which he had neither the strength to renounce nor the ability to transcend.

But let the note of querulous lamentation fade now, and all but the voice of ungrudging admiration be still. For when the critical score is balanced, it will be found that Vachel Lindsay has at least six poems in the small chaste urn containing all that one age passes on to the next. The pieces he will be remembered by (if I may venture into the dangerous realm of prophecy) are: *The Chinese Nightingale, The Congo, The Santa Fé Trail, General William Booth Enters into Heaven, The Golden Whales of California*, and the exquisite tribute to Altgeld, *The Eagle That is Forgotten*. Six such poems are enough. Enough to fill most of us with enduring gratitude and not a few of us with incurable envy. These poems are rigged with a vitality that was new in 1912 and is still new in 1932. With energy undiminished, and not a trace of barnacle to mar their glittering hulls or retard their swooping speed, they bound forward like clipper ships running before a live gale. That they will safely make the harbour of a secure immortality is not to be doubted by anyone who has watched their gait and direction for the past twenty years.

That America has a way of ordealizing its heroes by idealizing them is tragically apparent in the case of Vachel Lindsay. For at least ten years he came nearer to being our Hero as Poet than any man since Walt Whitman. Accordingly we placed him on a very high and very special pedestal, and demanded only of him that he remain where we placed him. That he wished to get down, move around, and go forward if possible, made no difference to us. We had "niched" him and we kept him niched, with all the implications good and bad of that elevating process. And now, re-reading the great poems that he wrote before we made him an idol, it seems a trifle absurd, rather cheaply patronizing, to pity this man. Yet we do pity him; not for what he was, or what he failed to be, but for the writhing ordeal he must have undergone during the last years of his life.

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# THE RUBY OF KHITMANDU

A SERIAL STORY TOLD IN ALTERNATE CHAPTERS BY ARTH—R C—N—N D—YLE AND E. W. H—RN—NG

## *by Hugh Kingsmill*

(SYNOPSIS.—*The Maharajah of Khitmandu, who is staying at Claridge's, is robbed of the famous Ruby of Khitmandu. Sherlock Holmes traces the theft to Raffles, who agrees to hand over the ruby to Holmes, on condition that he and his confederate Bunny are not proceeded against. Raffles has just explained the situation to Bunny. They are in the rooms of Raffles in the Albany.*)

### CHAPTER 15

### *(Bunny's Narrative)*

MY HEART froze at the incredible words which told me that Raffles, of all men, was throwing up the sponge without a struggle, was tamely handing over the most splendid of all the splendid trophies of his skill and daring to this imitation detective, after outwitting all the finest brains of the finest crime-investigating organization in the world. Suddenly the ice turned to fire, and I was on my feet, speaking as I had never spoken to living man before. What I said I cannot remember. If I could, I would not record it. I believe I wept. I know I went down on my knees. And Raffles sat there with never a word! I see him still, leaning back in a luxurious arm-chair, watching me with steady eyes sheathed by drooping lids. There was a faint smile on the handsome dare-devil face, and the hands were raised as if in deprecation; nor can I give my readers a more complete idea of the frenzy which had me in its grip than by recording the plain fact that I was utterly oblivious to the strangeness of the spectacle before me. Raffles apologetic, Raffles condescending to conciliate me—at any other time such a reversal of our natural rôles had filled me with unworthy exultation for myself, and bitter shame for him. But I was past caring now.

And then, still holding his palms towards me, he crossed them. I have said that during the telling of his monstrous decision he had the ruby between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. Now the left hand was where the right had been, and the ruby was in it. I suppose I should have guessed at once, I suppose I should have read in his smile what it needed my own eyes to tell me, that there was a ruby in his right hand too! So that was the meaning of the upraised hands! I swear that my first sensation was a pang of pure relief that Raffles had not stooped to conciliate me, my second a hot shame that I had been idiot enough even for one moment to believe him capable of doing so. Then the full significance of the two rubies flashed across me.

"An imitation?" I gasped, falling back into my chair.

"An exact replica."

"For Holmes?"

He nodded.

"But supposing he—"



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"That's a risk I have to take."

"Then I go with you."

A savage gleam lit up the steel-blue eyes.

"I don't want you."

"Holmes may spot it. I must share the risk."

"You fool, you'd double it!"

"Raffles!" The cry of pain was wrung from me before I could check it, but if there was weakness in my self-betrayal, I could not regret it when I saw the softening in his wonderful eyes.

"I didn't mean it, Bunny," he said.

"Then you'll take me!" I cried, and held my breath through an endless half-minute, until a consenting nod brought me to my feet again. The hand that shot out to grasp his was met half-way, and a twinkling eye belied the doleful resignation in his "What an obstinate rabbit it is!"

Our appointment with Holmes was for the following evening at nine. The clocks of London were striking the half-hour after eight when I entered the Albany. My dear villain, in evening dress, worn as only he could wear it, was standing by the table; but there was that in his attitude which struck the greeting dumb upon my lips. My eyes followed the direction of his, and I saw the two rubies side by side in their open cases.

"What is it, Raffles?" I cried. "Has anything happened?"

"It's no good, Bunny," he said, looking up. "I can't risk it. With anyone else I'd chance it, and be damned to the consequences, too. But Holmes—no, Bunny! I was a fool ever to play with the idea."

I could not speak. The bitterness of my disappointment, the depth of my disillusion, took me by the throat and choked me. That Raffles should be knocked out I could have borne, that he should let the fight go by default—there was the shame to which I could fit no words.

"He'd spot it, Bunny. He'd spot it." Raffles picked up one of the cases. "See this nick?" he asked lightly, for all the world as if blazing eyes and a scarlet face were an invitation to confidences. "I've marked this case because it holds the one and only Ruby of Khitmandu, and on my life I don't believe I could tell which ruby was which, if I once got the cases mixed."

"And yet," I croaked from a dry throat, "you think Holmes can do what you can't!"

"My dear rabbit, precious stones are one of his hobbies. The fellow's written a monograph on them, as I discovered only today. I'm not saying he'd spot my imitation, but I am most certainly not going to give him the chance," and he turned on his heel and strode into his bedroom for his overcoat.

The patient readers of these unworthy chronicles do not need to be reminded that I am not normally distinguished for rapidity of either thought or action. But for once brain and hand worked as surely and swiftly as though they had been Raffles's own, and the rubies had changed places a full half-minute before Raffles returned to find me on my feet, my hat clapped to my head, and a look in my eyes which opened his own in enquiry.

"I'm coming with you," I cried.

Raffles stopped dead, with an ugly glare.

"Haven't you grasped, my good fool, that I'm handing Holmes the real stone?"

"He may play you false."

"I refuse to take you."

"Then I follow you."

Raffles picked up the marked case, snapped it to, and slipped it into his overcoat pocket. I was outwitting him for his own good, yet a pang shot through me at the sight, with another to follow when the safe closed on

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the real ruby in the dummy's case. And the eyes that strove to meet his fell most shamefully as he asked if I still proposed to thrust my company upon him. Through teeth which I could hardly keep from chattering I muttered that it was a trap, that Holmes would take the stone and then call in the police, that I must share the danger as I would have shared the profits. A contemptuous shrug of the splendid shoulders, and a quick spin on his heel, were all the answer he vouchsafed me, and not a word broke the silence between us as we strode northwards through the night.

There was no tremor in the lean strong hand which raised the knocker on a door in Baker Street. He might have been going to a triumph instead of to the bitterest of humiliations. And it might be a triumph, after all! And he would owe it to me! But there was little enough of exultation in the heart which pounded savagely as I followed him upstairs, my fingers gripped tightly round the life-preserver in my pocket.

"Two gentlemen to see you, sir," wheezed the woman who had admitted us. "And one of them", drawled an insufferably affected voice, as we walked in, "is very considerately advertising the presence of a medium-sized life-preserver in his right overcoat pocket. My dear Watson, if you must wave a loaded revolver about, might I suggest that you do so in the passage? Thank you. It is certainly safer in your pocket. Well, Mr. Raffles, have you brought it?"

Without a word, Raffles took the case out, and handed it across to Holmes. As Holmes opened it, the fellow whom he had addressed as Watson leaned forward, breathing noisily. Criminals though we were, I could not repress a thrill of pride as I contrasted the keen bronze face of my companion with the yellow cadaverous countenance of Holmes, and reflected that my own alas indisputably undistinguished appearance could challenge a more than merely favourable comparison with the mottled complexion, bleared eyes, and ragged moustache of the detective's jackal.

"A beautiful stone, eh, Watson?" Holmes remarked, in the same maddening drawl, as he held the ruby to the light. "Well, Mr. Raffles, you have saved me a good deal of unnecessary trouble. The promptitude with which you have bowed to the inevitable does credit to your quite exceptional intelligence. I presume that you will have no objection to my submitting this stone to a brief examination?"

"I should not consider that you were fulfilling your duty to your client if you neglected such an elementary precaution."

It was perfectly said, but then was it not Raffles who said it? And said it from the middle of the shabby bear-skin rug, his legs apart and his back to the fire. Now, as always, the center of the stage was his at will, and I could have laughed at the discomfited snarl with which Holmes rose, and picking his way through an abominable litter of papers disappeared into the adjoining room. Three minutes, which seemed to me like twice as many hours, had passed by the clock on the mantlepiece, when the door opened again. Teeth set, and nerves strung ready, I was yet, even in this supreme moment, conscious of a tension in Raffles which puzzled me, for what had he, who believed the stone to be the original ruby, to fear? The menacing face of the detective brought my life-preserver half out of my pocket, and the revolver of the man Watson wholly out of his. Then, to my unutterable relief, Holmes said, "I need not detain you any longer, Mr. Raffles. But one word in parting. Let this be your last visit to these rooms".

There was a threat in the slow-dropping

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syllables which I did not understand, and would have resented, had I had room in my heart for any other emotion than an overwhelming exultation. Through a mist I saw Raffles incline his head with a faintly contemptuous smile. And I remember nothing more, till we were in the open street, and the last sound I expected startled me back into my senses. For Raffles was chuckling.

"I'm disappointed in the man, Bunny," he murmured with a laugh. "I was convinced he would spot it. But I was ready for him."

"Spot it?" I gasped, fighting an impossible suspicion.

"Yes, spot the dummy which my innocent rabbit was so insultingly sure was the one and only Ruby of Khitmandu."

"What!" my voice rose to a shriek. "Do you mean it was the dummy which was in the marked case?"

He spun round with a savage "Of course!"

"But you said it was the real one."

"And again, of course!"

Suddenly I saw it all. It was the old, old wretched story. He would trust no one but himself. He alone could bluff Holmes with a dummy stone. So he had tried to shake me off with the lie about restoring the real stone. And my unwitting hand had turned the lie to truth! As I reeled, he caught my arm.

"You fool! You infernal, you unutterable fool!" He swung me round to face his blazing eyes. "What have you done?"

"I swopped them over. And be damned to you!"

"You swopped them over?" The words came slowly through clenched teeth.

"When you were in your bedroom. So it *was* the one and only ruby you gave him after all," and the hand that was raised to strike me closed on my mouth as I struggled to release the wild laughter which was choking in my throat.

## CHAPTER 16

### *(Dr. Watson's Narrative)*

I must confess that as the door closed on Raffles and his pitiful confederate I felt myself completely at a loss to account for the unexpected turn which events had taken. There was no mistaking the meaning of the stern expression on the face of Holmes when he rejoined us after examining the stone. I saw at once that his surmise had proved correct, and that Raffles had substituted an imitation ruby for the original. The almost laughable agitation with which the lesser villain pulled out his life-preserver at my friend's entrance confirmed me in this supposition. It was clear to me that he was as bewildered as myself when Holmes dismissed Raffles instead of denouncing him. Indeed, his gasp of relief as he preceded Raffles out of the room was so marked as to bring me to my feet with an ill-defined impulse to rectify the extraordinary error into which, as it seemed to me, Holmes had been betrayed.

"Sit down!" Holmes snapped, with more than his usual asperity.

"But, Holmes!" I cried, "is it possible you do not realize—?"

"I realize that, as usual, you realize nothing. Take this stone. Guard it as you would guard the apple of your eye. And bring it to me here at eight tomorrow morning."

"But Holmes, I don't understand—"

"I have no time to discuss the limitations of your intelligence."

I have always been willing to make allowances for my friend's natural impatience with a less active intelligence than his own. Nevertheless, I could not repress a feeling of mortification as he thrust the case into my hand, and propelled me into the passage. But the night air, and the brisk pace at which I set out down Baker Street, soon served to restore

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my equanimity. A long experience of my friend's extraordinary powers had taught me that he often saw clearly when all was darkness to myself. I reflected that he had no doubt some excellent reason for letting the villains go. No man could strike more swiftly and with more deadly effect than Holmes, but equally no man knew better how to bide his time, or could wait more patiently to enmesh his catch beyond the possibility of escape. While these thoughts were passing through my mind, I had been vaguely conscious of two men walking ahead of me, at a distance of about a hundred yards. Suddenly one of them reeled, and would have fallen had not his companion caught his arm. My first impression was that I was witnessing the spectacle, alas only too common a one in all great cities, of two drunken men assisting each other homewards. But as I observed the couple in pity mingled with repulsion, the one who had caught the other's arm raised his hand as if to deliver a blow. I felt for my revolver, and was about to utter a warning shout, when I perceived that they were the very men who had just been occupying my thoughts. The need for caution instantly asserted itself. Halting, I drew out my pipe, filled it, and applied a match. This simple stratagem enabled me to collect my thoughts. It was plain that these rascals had quarrelled. I recalled the familiar adage that when thieves fall out honest men come by their own, and I summoned all my powers to imagine what Holmes would do in my place. To follow the rogues at a safe distance, and act as the development of the situation required, seemed to me the course of action which he would pursue. But I could not conceal from myself that his view of what the situation might require would probably differ materially from my own. For an instant I was tempted to hasten back to him with the news of this fresh development. But a moment's reflection convinced me that to do so would be to risk the almost certain loss of my quarry. I had another, and I fear a less excusable motive for not returning. The brusquerie of my dismissal still rankled a little. It would be gratifying if I could, this once, show my imperious friend that I was capable of making an independent contribution to the unravelling of a problem. I therefore quickened my steps, and soon diminished the distance between myself and my quarry to about fifty yards. It was obvious that the dispute was still in progress. Raffles himself maintained a sullen silence, but the excitable voice and gestures of his accomplice testified that the quarrel, whatever its nature, was raging with unabated vehemence.

They had entered Piccadilly, and I was still at their heels, when they turned abruptly into Albany Courtyard. By a fortunate coincidence I had for some weeks been visiting the Albany in my professional capacity, having been called in by my old friend General Macdonagh, who was now at death's door. I was therefore known to the commissionaire, who touched his hat as I hastened past him. With the realization that this was where Raffles lived, the course of action I should adopt became clear to me. He had the latch-key in his door, as I came up.

"By Heavens!" his companion cried. "It's Watson!"

"*Dr.* Watson, if you please, Bunny." The scoundrel turned to me with a leer. "This is indeed a charming surprise, doctor."

Ignoring the covert insolence of the man, I demanded sternly if he would accord me a brief audience in his rooms.

"But, of course, my dear doctor. Any friend of Mr. Holmes is our friend, too. You will excuse me if I lead the way."

My hand went to my revolver, and as the

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door of his rooms closed behind us, I whipped it out, at the same time producing the case which contained the imitation ruby.

"Here is your imitation stone," I cried, tossing the case on to the table. "Hand over the real one, or I shall shoot you like a dog."

Accomplished villain though he was, he could not repress a start of dismay, while his miserable confederate collapsed on a sofa with a cry of horror.

"This is very abrupt, doctor," Raffles said, picking the case up and opening it. 'May I ask if you are acting on the instructions of Mr. Holmes? It is, after all, with Mr. Holmes that I am dealing."

"You are dealing with me now. That is the only fact you need to grasp."

"But Mr. Holmes was entirely satisfied with the stone I handed him."

"I am not here to argue. Will you comply with my request?"

"It is disgraceful of Holmes to send you to tackle the pair of us single-handed."

"*Mr.* Holmes, you blackguard! And he knows nothing of what I am doing."

"Really? Then I can only say he does not deserve such a lieutenant. Well, Bunny, our triumph was, I fear, a little premature."

A minute later, I was in the passage, the case containing the genuine stone in my breast pocket. Through the closed door there rang what I took to be the bitter, baffled laugh of an outwitted scoundrel. In general, I am of a somewhat sedate temper, but it was, I confess, in a mood which almost bordered on exultation that I drove back to Baker Street, and burst in on Holmes.

"I've got it! I've got it!" I cried, waving the case.

"Delirium tremens?" Holmes inquired coldly, from his arm-chair. I noticed that he was holding a revolver.

"The original ruby, Holmes!"

With a bound as of a panther Holmes leaped from his chair and snatched the case from my hand. "You idiot!" he hissed. "What have you done?"

Vexed and bewildered, I told my story, while Holmes stared at me with heaving chest and flaming eyes. My readers will have guessed the truth, which Holmes flung at me in a few disconnected sentences, interspersed with personal observations of an extremely disparaging nature. It was indeed the original ruby which Raffles had brought with him, and which Holmes, suspecting that Raffles would attempt to retrieve it while he slept, had entrusted to my keeping. The warning which Holmes had given Raffles not to visit him again was now explained, as was also the vigil with a loaded revolver on which my friend had embarked when I burst in on him.

The arrest a fortnight later of Raffles and the man Bunny, and the restoration of the famous ruby to its lawful owner, will be familiar to all readers of the daily papers. During this period the extremely critical condition of General Macdonagh engaged my whole attention. His decease was almost immediately followed by the unexpected deaths of two other patients, and in the general pressure of these sad events I was unable to visit Holmes in order to learn from his own lips the inner story of the final stages in this remarkable case.

THE END

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# GEORGE ELIOT: VICTORIAN QUEEN

*by John Macy*

In 1858 when *Scenes of Clerical Life* was published, Mary Ann Evans was thirty-eight years old and George Eliot was unknown. Within ten years the masculine pseudonym was as firmly established and almost as widely renowned as that of the other great George, the older woman who lived in France. No other English woman of letters has had such a swift and certain career, swift though tardily begun. Maggie Tulliver, the yeoman's daughter, is the most eminent Victorian lady—in the realm of intellect. Between the girl that was and the creator of the girl that is there lies a slow development, strangely retarding and hindering yet quick in its release when the release finally comes. And the development is not hindering after all, since destiny viewed in retrospect is all clear and accounted for, so far as genius can ever be accounted for, and because everything in life is fish to the net of the novelist.

The story of George Eliot is an intellectual and emotional biography, in which the intellectual element has been overemphasized almost in defiance of the emotional evidence of the novels and in curious disregard of the passionate will that burned under the superficially reasoned and justified allegiance of George Eliot to George Henry Lewes. A provincial girl of sound stock, with nothing of the wild inheritance of the Brontës, receives a conventional education like other young women of the middle class. She is a prize pupil in music and in languages, domestic and foreign; she is, besides, a sensible young woman, a capable housekeeper for her father. Her education extends beyond the schoolroom in two directions. She is observing the life about her and so, as it turned out, is laying the solidest part of her foundation as a writer of fiction. She read widely in books not usually entertaining to young ladies, but her reading had no selective purpose. Her guide was a general intellectual curiosity, which was not considered a desirable gift in one of her sex. Mr. Tulliver puts it in less literary language:

> . . . too 'cute for a woman, I'm afraid. It's no mischief much while she's a little 'un, but an over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the better price for that.

Miss Evans fell in with some philosophic freethinkers and became a sceptic. Disbelief in Christianity had been commonplace in urban civilizations since the eighteenth century, but it was just beginning to reach the conservative provinces. Miss Evans's infidelity took the open form of refusal to attend church, and the gravity of that offence at that time is almost inconceivable in our liberal or indifferent age. As is often the case with converts out of Christianity, Miss Evans's revolt was intellectual; she never ceased to be religious at heart, and the emotional value of her rebellion lies in its expression of a courageous will, an independence which was combined with an almost timid dependence on others.

Her religion never left her, and her philosophy did her no serious damage. Her intellec-



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tuality does impede her later narratives, and the burden of her erudition is sometimes too heavy for the artist to carry; it would certainly have been too heavy for a less vigorous, less richly endowed creative genius. She plunges into the seas of speculation and controversy with her "whole soul" and survives the immersion without even a skin-deep chill. She translates Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and later, Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, and competent authorities say that she does the work well. Translation—especially of books on such subjects in German—is a brain-battering task, but she had, at least in the beginning, genuine enthusiasm for these books, once liberating but now dead beyond resurrection to one who looks at them for the sake of the famous translator. By a curious indirection and after long delay philosophy and great affairs of the mind led George Eliot into her rightful kingdom of romance. She was born to it, and a great king saved her from wandering too far. Late in life she said that the writer who had done most to upset her orthodoxy was Walter Scott. He may have had that extraordinary effect on an extraordinary young woman; we can be fairly sure what was the real influence of the incomparable past master of romance on the romancer that was to be. Whatever the lineage in life of Hetty Sorrel, in the realm of imagination she is daughter, or sister, of Effie Deans.

Too much weight has been placed by Leslie Stephen and others on the apparent fact that George Eliot, alone among English novelists, 'came to fiction from philosophy". Rather she wandered in philosophy for an unconscionably long time before she was rescued and set on her true course by a philosopher, George Henry Lewes. It is a series of happy accidents. Through her friends the Brays, philosophic amateurs, she became acquainted with the publisher Chapman, who made her assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*. Her fine mind and pleasing personality won the approval of some of the new radical thinkers, including Herbert Spencer, who seems to have been in love with her after his fashion. She might have remained an able editor, reviewer, translator, perhaps the author of learned works listed in handbooks under the name of Mary Ann Evans. We should never have heard of George Eliot if Herbert Spencer had not made her acquainted with Lewes. Even philosophers can be of immense service to imaginative literature.

Lewes was more than a philosopher. He had been an actor, like his grandfather, had studied medicine, had lived in France and Germany, and knew much more than most philosophic Englishmen about current intellectual movements on the Continent. He had written a play, two novels, one of which is said to be readable, reviews and essays on a great variety of topics; he was an excellent specimen of the polygraphic writer with talent enough to be something better than a hack. He could more than hold his own in any company with any subject under discussion, and he had more wit than many of his more famous contemporaries. Above all he was honest, affectionate, loyal, and he adored George Eliot. Their union would have been as nearly perfect as the spirit of romance could devise if they had both been beautiful to look at. Lewes was so notoriously uncomely that Douglas Jerrold called him the ugliest man in London. And George Eliot, as she lives in Frederick Burton's drawing in the National Portrait Gallery, is not of ravishing loveliness. It is said that from those heavy lips issued a musical contralto voice. The eyes are intelligent. They seem capable of showing passion.

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The union of George Eliot and George Lewes has been elevated by biography and legend to a supercorporeal fusion of great minds. The facts are quite simple and the explanation of them demands no rarefaction or high condoning discussion of the affinities of genius. Lewes's wife had been unfaithful to him and he was quite in the right, though the laws of England ("diabolical", as George Eliot called them before there could have been any question of her own case) put him and any woman he lived with legally in the wrong. Lewes and George Eliot in full maturity took their affairs into their own hands and, law or no law, lived together openly as man and wife. The situation required some courage on her part and cost her a few friends who obviously were not worth keeping. She insisted on the word "husband" and her attitude was a little defiant, perhaps according to the most advanced modern standards not defiant enough; a really emancipated woman might have shown complete independence by discarding the conventional terms of marital cohabitation. Biography need be neither defiant nor apologetic, and literature applauds a relationship that discovered and fostered the genius of George Eliot. We know and care nothing about the intimacies of George Eliot and Lewes, except to note that there were no children by way of evidence. Their privacies are none of our business. But when I read that George Eliot and Lewes sought only intellectual companionship and sympathy, I reflect that these two energetic and physically sound people began to live with each other when she was thirty-four and he was thirty-six, and that if they did not fully enjoy each other they were such imbeciles as neither of them ever showed themselves to be in any other relation. It is fair to suppose, and quite pertinent to literary biography, that the genius in George Eliot and the woman in her woke and expressed themselves at about the same time, when she was a little past the flush of youth but still in full bloom. The tact, the practical and helpful perception of Lewes are like nothing else in the history of genius, of that circumstantial part of genius which we can understand. For once a lover was a competent and useful critic of his beloved. Her debt to him she expresses in detail and repeatedly, with much more than the loving acknowledgment which we frequently find in prefaces, to him, or to her, "without whom this book could never have been written". Mrs. Browning was a poet of published achievement before she knew Browning. Before George Eliot lived with Lewes she had done nothing worth remembering except as her later work makes her early efforts memorable. They lived happily together until his death, a year or two before hers.

## II

Lewes urged George Eliot to try her hand at a novel. She had vaguely thought of trying and had expressed her contempt of silly novels written by women. Lewes brought her ambition to a focus and overcame her reluctance and distrust of herself. The result was the three short novels in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. We cannot guess whether this book would be known at all if George Eliot had done no more. But any reader can make sure for himself that here is the essential George Eliot in little, but by no means groping and amateurish, and that the stories are still good to read. Blackwood thought that they were worth publishing and paying for, before he knew whether the author was man or woman. George Eliot was made by her first real book. And in it she used what was always her best material, provincial life faithfully observed and emotionally rendered. W

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have fortunately got past (at least I hope so) the tiresome talk about realism, romanticism, naturalism. All invented stories are "romantic", whether they are about a hen-house or a fairy. If they are not romantic in vision and treatment, they are as dull as the worst of Sinclair Lewis and may be filed with last year's almanac and other "human documents".

The best of the three stories in *Scenes of Clerical Life* is the second, *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, which seems to be the work of a veteran. It has many of George Eliot's virtues and few of her faults. She is a little impeded by her best black silk Sunday-and-company skirt or her academic gown, and she never kicks loose from that encumbrance except in her great free-limbed passages, when she lets herself go and writes like a vigorous woman, if not like an angel. She never writes like an imitation of a man. We who are wise after the fact think it strange that everybody of importance except Charles Dickens thought that the new author was a man. It is still more strange that when Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* appeared anonymously in 1874, many people attributed it to George Eliot. The very good excuse for that mistake is that before Hardy only George Eliot had drawn peasants who talked and acted alive. George Eliot in the very run of her sentences and in her total attitude is feminine. When I speak of her picking off her skirts, I do not mean the symbol of her sex but the stiff and stately pseudo-literary garment which encases men and women. George Eliot does relish with so evident satisfaction her intellectually clowy and made-up sentences. But this weakness has been too heavily underscored by some of her critics, as if there were a special righteousness in finding this particular fault in a woman. Her big style, not her great style, is annoying; more tiresome to us, probably, than to her contemporaries; for, whatever our shortcomings, the tendency of the best modern narrative prose is toward the idiom of speech and away from the library. But artificiality and empty rotundity were a prevalent and tolerated, even admired vice of the nineteenth century. We find it in muscular men, in Reade, and in Dickens, who laughed at it when he ascribed it to Micawber but failed to see it in himself. It is unfair to point to George Eliot censoriously as a lady on a high horse merely because she is a lady. Only, we are glad when she and other writers, except the few who are really able to fly on the winged horse, dismount and talk to us. The three tales in *Scenes of Clerical Life* are simple in substance and manner; they show a little sign of effort and anxiety to phrase well, but they do not creak.

The favourable reception of *Scenes of Clerical Life* cleared away George Eliot's misgivings, and the enthusiastic Lewes was always beside her, inspiring and never interfering. She began *Adam Bede* immediately and finished it in a year. England had a new novelist of the first rank. Henceforth English and American readers looked forward to another book by George Eliot as they did to the next novel of Dickens or Thackeray. After three-quarters of a century she holds her place. There is no way of telling how widely she is read today or how widely Dickens and Thackeray are read. Most Victorian fiction that has survived has settled into the respectable state of classics, of "ought-to-read" books, of standard sets, selected titles in universal libraries of best literature, and school editions. Of course George Eliot's popularity has waned with the passing of the generation to whom she was new and with the aging of us who found her in our fathers' libraries. Our young peo-

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ple are quite properly interested in the novels of their own day, as young people always have been, including George Eliot's first readers. But here is one small bit of evidence that came to me by opportune accident as I was planning this essay. A student in one of our huge degree-mills called universities was reading in my room, labouring under the dreadful affliction of prescribed books. He opened the thick volume of *Adam Bede* with a groan. He was engrossed for hours and made one comment much more valuable than the theme he had to write and better than most profound critical essays: "Gee! This is a great story! I didn't know it was going to be good stuff like this!"

It is good stuff. I have found it difficult to keep my resolution to approach the Victorians with a fresh mind, because my mind is not fresh but filled with them. I was doubtful how George Eliot would taste now. Happily I had no difficulty in running through the novels again, with judicious or instinctive skipping of some long solid-looking paragraphs. *Adam Bede* is good stuff. And I resented some difficulties that other critics had wantonly put in the way of my enjoyment. For example, it has been questioned whether Adam, after Hetty's disaster, does not turn too easily and joyfully to Dinah, whether that is not a forced happy ending. It is not; it is perfectly natural. Dinah is made attractive from the beginning, and a healthy man does not lose his virility under the tragic loss of one woman. Adam's vigour and love of woman reassert themselves, and in due time he finds another object of desire. Such a plain fact George Eliot involves or develops in many fine words, in high idealisms, ennoblements of character which find their reward in beautiful alliances. But she does not go wrong in the essential basic motives of men and women. She has what is drearily called "psychological insight", which means nothing in life and art but understanding people and knowing how to make the understanding clear to others, not by analysis but by showing what people do. George Eliot is a wise woman, and her deepest wisdom is not didactic but directly emotional, what some women like to think of, or at least talk of, as "intuitive". Her heroes in their strength and weakness, Adam and Tito, have been fussed out of their natural countenances by critics bent upon proving that thus and thus only a woman can conceive a man. I can understand that Rochester and Heathcliff are women's creations. But I believe, with the concurrence of intelligent women to whom I have put the question, that George Eliot's men could have been created by a man of sufficient genius.

Her triumph of character-creation is in her women, in Mrs. Poyser, first in time if not in point of perfection. She is George Eliot's favourite character in *Adam Bede*, as is shown by the affectionate care bestowed upon her and by the unconcealed pleasure which the author takes in making her talk. To be sure, it is not always safe to judge an author's intention by the result. It may well be that Shakespeare did not mean to make Falstaff the leading character in a drama of high astounding themes, but threw him in for what is called comic relief, and also by way of showing what a dissolute young fellow the prince was before he reformed and became a great king. But what Shakespeare did was to make Falstaff the towering figure in the play, so that in *Henry V*, where Falstaff does not appear at all, Mistress Quickly's brief report of his death is the finest thing in the play and takes the wind out of the blank-verse heroics. Mrs. Poyser, a minor character in the tragic action and quite ou

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of the amatory plot, dominates *Adam Bede*. Her magnitude can be diminished by quoting her remarks, which became current like proverbs. She lives in her totality, her repeated shrewdness, and she is maintained continuously to the end. The reader wants no less of her, perhaps no more of her, but gets just enough; in her entrances and in her talk she is exactly apropos. She stands in the gallery of great fictitious portraits, imperishable—one can be prophetic if only for the sake of saying a thing strongly—sure of as great longevity as the language of which she is effective and eloquent mistress.

Dinah is a little too pure to be true, she is an embodiment of one of George Eliot's pet and somewhat overworked themes, the devotion of a great soul to an ideal. But if her demure perfection is once granted, she is a luminous person from the time she first appears, excellently described and realized in the second chapter. She would have converted any male sinner to Methodism, just as, I insist again, she quite naturally, though not deliberately, converted Adam into *her* lover. The thin spot in the novel is Donnithorne, the not very vicious and properly repentant seducer. He is too innocent to be a Lovelace and too slight to have the tragic interest of a Dimmesdale; he is not interesting in any way except as a sort of indispensable nuisance for the undoing of Hetty; that, indeed, is all that he need be, all that the plot requires of him. George Eliot's fine gentlemen and ladies are feeble compared to her characters of the lower orders. She remains a conservative commoner like Dickens, and like him she finds her ideal characters among simple folk. She misses something when she leaves her native scene, air, and early familiar social classes and situations. Like Dickens, too, she treats humble people with sympathy and genuine respect and shows the edge of satire or applies the cold flat of the blade to those who were born above her. Her respect for those intellectually beyond her, like Savonarola, is quite another attitude than that which she holds toward ordinary English people of any grade. She was child of a yeoman. She had none of the stiff snobbery of the humble, and broadly believed that art should enlarge our sympathies with people who differ from us in every way except that they are "struggling, erring human creatures". This is a thoroughly middle-class ideal of art, and was preached by Tolstoy after he tried to transform himself from an aristocrat to a peasant and succeeding only in landing in the flattest kind of middle negativity.

George Eliot was true at her best to what she was born and bred; as some one said of her after the publication of *Adam Bede*, with no derogatory intention, she was a "self-educated farmer's daughter". One part of her native scene, the physical scene itself, she loved with a passion as intense as her feeling for the people who inhabited it. Therefore she is effective in her descriptions both of the outdoor world and of interiors, of all visible things which give a sense of place. Her descriptions are not decorations but fit the tale like the human characters; in this she is unrivalled between Scott and Hardy. We do not resent her landscapes as intrusions, but are content to dwell in them. And as for Adam's shop and Mrs. Poyser's dairy, you can smell them, and the smell is sweet.

## III

Heartened by success and at the top pitch of her powers, George Eliot went speedily forward to her next masterpiece, *The Mill on the Floss* and finished it in a year. There is not much choice between the first large novel and the second. They are twin peaks.

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The matter, tone, texture and execution of the two are much the same, however unlike the plots may be. Yet the second is not a repetition of the first or in any way a sequel, except as an author with a distinct and positive personality ought to repeat himself and infallibly does, as Shakespeare does, in spite of the inane proverb. *The Mill on the Floss* is the book of Maggie; indeed, it was first tentatively called "Sister Maggie", until the more mellifluous and quite satisfactory title was hit upon. A fitting sub-title (analogous to the sub-title of *Richard Feverel*) might be "A Tragedy of Brother and Sister". But Maggie prevails and all else is subordinate. It is an old and worn commentary that George Eliot put herself into Maggie and that the story is, emotionally, autobiographical. But that commentary invites a little more comment. George Eliot throws herself into Maggie's character, takes her side with undisguised, perhaps unconscious partisanship. You see everything from Maggie's point of view when she is on the scene. In the contests between Tom and Maggie you are forced to stand behind Maggie and look with her eyes and feel with her feelings, though George Eliot has so great a grasp of character and so strong a sense of dramatic justice and conflict that Tom, boy and man, is an independent person who leaps up from the page and speaks and strikes. The power of the story is in the clash of two independent antagonistic wills. Maggie dominates in spite of her docility to the strong male, a submission which has been objected to as too weakly feminine for one of her assertive, passionate nature reinforced by a superior intelligence.

Here again I have been somewhat distracted from the pleasure of rereading the book by more or less conventional objections which a reader of biography and criticism cannot avoid. It seems to this admiring male reader that Maggie acts exactly as that kind of girl would act, that particular girl, whose character is clearly laid down in the first place and consistently developed. Her submission is one of circumstance, of set social law, by which the male actually had authority and could command obedience; moreover her affection for her father is used as a weapon against her. She submits, but she goes on rebelling inside. The complication of Tom's real difficulties is excellent plotting, most skilful entangling of motives and emotions. Where in fiction is there a woman who behaves more persuasively than Maggie, with more semblance of inevitable truth to her inner self and appropriate response to her situation? George Eliot knew Maggie as she knew Mrs. Poyser, not only because she made them but because she thought through them. Maggie is the girl that the gentle, quiet and (except for one minor legal matter) respectable and ladylike George Eliot would have been in the imagined circumstances. It is almost as if she had invented a plot to try what she herself would feel and do. George Eliot can usually be trusted to make people whom she thoroughly understands and completely works out do and say the dramatically, humanly right thing. There is no fault in the total plan or the sequence of events or the several characters. The minor characters are perfectly done, the Gleggs and Sister Pullet, Mrs. Tulliver and Mr. Tulliver, the third leading character, on whose misfortune the story hangs.

The formal tragedy of the story has been questioned as an artificial way of settling matters by killing the characters for no fault of their own. The flood is indeed an act of God (in the unwittingly absurd phrase of the law), but it is not a forced catastrophe it happens naturally at just that time and place, so that Maggie and Tom are caught in

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it without the slightest strain on the reader's credulity. Accidents can be plausible in the best regulated novels. Hardy makes use of them repeatedly, and so does Shakespeare when he drops the curtain on Romeo and Juliet. Novel readers accepted what is called an unhappy ending, which was even more unusual when the book was published than it is now. There is a kind of relief in seeing an end, however abrupt, put to the difficulties in which Maggie's nature has plunged her. The concluding section of the novel is called rightly *The Last Rescue*, and the terminal chapter, *The Last Conflict*. If there is a weakness in the story, it comes just before the end in the last feeble appearances of Philip Wakem and Stephen Guest. George Eliot has provided Maggie with two lovers in every way unsatisfactory; there is too much sentimental play for sympathy in the crippled Wakem, and Stephen Guest need not have been quite the coxcomb that, intending a defensive denial, he correctly calls himself. But they are all the lovers that Fate may have had at hand in Maggie's limited acquaintance. Oddly enough, we should like to see her try again. There is a double pain in her death, regret for the end of an attractive young woman, and unsatisfied curiosity as to how she might have developed. This persists in spite of the relief at knowing that she is at rest after her brief and fitful fever. To make the reader wonder about a character beyond the last page is a supreme act of creation.

## IV

Either because she began late or because, whatever her age, she had drawn abundantly on the best material that was in her, George Eliot's later books are somewhat of a descent from her two greatest. Her emotional energy seems to be running out and she writes entirely with her still active brain, confirming the reputation which her total work does not deserve, of an intellectual, philosophic woman turned novelist. And she wasted some time and energy in verse and drama which is of little value. She is invisible and her voice is inaudible in the choir, in that rich chorus of major and minor poets which is one of the glories of the nineteenth century and of all English literature. In *Silas Marner* there is still something of the best of George Eliot. The village folk are marvellously well done. The robbery, and the relation of Godfrey to Eppie, are melodrama. The redemption of Silas by the child and the symbolic substitution in his affections of her golden locks for his golden metal are a too patent parable. Mrs. Winthrop and the rustics give the book its lasting vitality.

When George Eliot comes to *Romola* she has confessedly run short of her native material and is in search of a theme. *Romola* has almost everything in it that a great intelligence could derive from a prodigiously industrious study of history, but it is not a good historical novel, because history swamps fiction. As for the colour and feeling of Italy, George Eliot did not absorb Italy into her system and let just enough of it come out for the purposes of the novel, as Scott did with other places and scenes, as Dumas did, as Thackeray did, as Reade did in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and as Hawthorne did not in *The Marble Faun*. Romola is an abstraction of sacrifice and devotion and the desperate conflicts of high-minded allegiance; she is delicately, exquisitely drawn, but she is idealized out of her womanhood and never comes alive. Tito is a keen, even subtle study of a selfish weakling, whose character we watch with unsympathetic curiosity. George Eliot makes you feel that she knew her man well, but that he was not worth knowing for

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so many pages. Savonarola, who could be a fascinating character in a straight biography, turns cold in spite of George Eliot's warm admiration for him. He is dragged out of a book of history and falls dead in the process of being transferred to George Eliot's novel. History does not matter, nor the approval or disapproval of expert historians; it is the fiction that fails.

*Felix Holt*, the story of a radical reformer, is a thesis-novel, not because George Eliot has a thesis but because Felix has; and he is wearisome in expounding it and wrestling with it. The only way to handle a crank is to back him with intense conviction and make a tragically serious hero of him or to treat him with irony. George Eliot has no conviction, she is only intellectually interested in a problem on which she primed herself by reading old files of the newspapers, and her humour deserts her so far as Felix is concerned. But her acute and sympathetic insight does not desert her in the portrait of Mrs. Transome, with her sensitive nature and unrevealed past covered by an outward bitterness. That character is worth all the rest in the book.

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot came back to very nearly her best, but not quite her best, if only because the characters, though provincial, are not rustics; they live on a more highly civilized plane, and not one of them from first to last says anything shrewd or amusing, not one of them does anything dramatic or significant. George Eliot's real strength is her simple but uncanny genius for finding profound, even tremendous, significance in people who superficially regarded are commonplace. In *Middlemarch* the people are commonplace and they remain just that, they are not transmuted by the inexplicable magic of genius into something strange yet familiar. It is possible to feel sorry for Dorothea in both her marriages, but you get tired of having her in the room; she is not entertaining as a thing of beauty, or as an amusing fool, or as an object of sympathy. Her idealism may be saintly, but it has no substance. Mr. Brooke is a comic character, the man who knows nothing about everything and babbles about it repetitiously. The trouble is that he is a bore in the book as in life, and he is not a funny bore. I never know whether the characters in *Middlemarch* are moving in front of me or whether I am supposed to get up and walk round them to make sure that they are alive, as they undoubtedly are. The author, laborious, thoughtful, and undeniably skilful, has left too much work for the reader. Casaubon, the anaemic prig and pedant, is a good subject, so true and lifelike in his dead way that he is an excellent model to draw from; but the artist's drawing is flatter than he is. The only vital effect of him, which keeps the reader alert, is that his nagging irritation of Dorothea is irritating to the reader, who squirms not with the really uncomfortable delight which true satire affords but with a sort of itch to kill the man—and that is accomplished by closing the book.

The best thing in the novel is the degeneration of the ambitious Lydgate under the influence of the hopelessly stupid pretty Rosamond; it is a painfully relentless process to watch but it is carried through with a steady hand, perfectly controlled and unflagging. Bulstrode, the pious hypocrite, would be worthy to stand beside Pecksniff, if he were not so soberly and earnestly drawn that you cannot laugh at him or cordially despise him; that sort of character should be drawn with broader lines of comedy.

*Middlemarch* was well received if only because of the author's great reputation, and Dorothea Brooke became one of the acceptec

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heroines of fiction. It may be that the effect which the book makes of turgidity and of slowness without a sense of leisure is due to what might be the generous merit of richness, of too much material arranged to run in too many directions. There are three love stories, no one of which would make a whole novel, all three of which together do not make a unified novel. Perhaps the defect is in George Eliot's style, which is here at its loftiest (except in *Romola*) and so is least easy, least in the thrilling accents of life acted and spoken. *Daniel Deronda* I simply cannot read even after a recent honest trial prompted by my critical duty to know everything about George Eliot. She was indeed at the end of her vitality and her death came at the right time.

If we followed chronology, this literary survey would peter out to an anticlimax. But it is always possible to return to the high places. Moreover, George Eliot's life does not end in anticlimax but is shiningly successful to the end. She sits enthroned in a domestic Sunday afternoon court, as near to a *salon* as could ever be in England. She is the solitary great English novelist known to be alive, for Dickens and Thackeray are dead, Hardy has just begun, and few people are aware that Meredith exists. Of eminent men in all intellectual pursuits only Tennyson could be center of such an admiring court and only one English woman could hold a higher court. It has been a magnificent career and in the light of its setting we can turn back across the great peaks to the dawn slope where the career began. We come upon this from the first short novel, *Amos Barton*:

> Do you know . . . real farm-house cream? . . . You have a vague idea of a milch cow as probably a white plaster animal standing in a butterman's window, and you know nothing of the sweet history of genuine cream, such as Miss Gibbs's: how it was this morning in the udders of large sleek beasts, as they stood lowing a patient entreaty under the milking-shed; how it fell with a pleasant rhythm into Betty's pail, sending a delicious incense into the cool air; how it was carried into that temple of moist cleanliness, the dairy, where it quietly separated itself from the meaner elements of milk, and lay in mellowed whiteness, ready for the skimming dish which transferred it to Miss Gibbs's glass cream-jug.

When the woman who wrote that had finished her last novel twenty years later, she sat alone under a halo of glory. Presently the way was clear for an even greater celebrant of milkmaids and dairies, Thomas Hardy.

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# AN AUTHOR GLARES AT EDITORS

*Anonymous*

All editors are numskulls part of the time, some editors are numskulls all of the time, and the majority of editors are numskulls most of the time.

That paraphrase may seem like wise-cracking thunder to startle and challenge the attention, but it is a weighed, considered, literal and serious statement of opinion based on twenty-five years of professional contact with editors. If there is some rancour in the utterance, I hope to prove that it does not affect its essential verity.

That I broadcast from the privacy of THE BOOKMAN studio, instead of appearing in my own proper person, may impress you as discretion, cowardice, modesty or what you like. I think my reasons for anonymity are adequate, but whether they are or not doesn't affect the validity of the evidence. To coin a phrase, the facts speak for themselves.

But to spike possible discrediting of my testimony, I will offer this bit of negative information; my failure to identify myself is not due to failure in my profession. Periodically speaking (speaking of periodicals), I am a moderate success. I have also published a dozen books—none at my own expense. I have been syndicated and featured in newspapers. I am in *Who's Who*. I sell 98% of my stuff at prices good enough to earn me a quarter-century average of better than ten thousand a year. Which means that while I am not a "big name" I *am* an established author—or, if you prefer, a competent hack.

The Editor (who said he didn't mind being called a numskull, thus weakening my opening statement) will testify that I am not without honour in my own country.

I produce these few exhibits only to show that I'm not a "flop" blaming his own incapacity and futility on unsympathetic editors.

Why then bite the hands that feed me? I don't. The hands that feed me are my own, pounding a typewriter, and pounding stamps on to fresh envelopes for remailing rejected manuscripts. Editorial hands for twenty-five years have been hands that metaphorically pushed me on the chest, poked me in the eye, clouted me on the chin and proved to be the hands that feed me only when my persistence and my ability to take punishment wrested a check from their weary fingers. I have a public and it likes my stuff—but the hammering I've had to do on editorial numskulls to break through to that public would erect a half-dozen skyscrapers.

I would write this rather in pity than in anger were editorial numskullity purely negative. Were they merely unresponsible to stimuli less delicate than the reiterated thump of a flat-wheeled trolley. But there is a form of numskullosity which is active, and which attacks the otherwise best of fellows the moment he sits behind an editorial desk. It's something like getting behind the steering wheel of a car. And you know what *that* does to manners.

Could I write a book!

Editors who send out word to aspiring young writers that they are too busy to see



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them—their busyness consisting of a crap game! Editors who *ask* you to send in stuff and then return it with a rejection slip—and often without even that printed regret. Editors of a new magazine, starving for material, trying to get first-rate stuff for third-rate prices—returning with a rejection slip, a well-known author's manuscript (not mine) which had been submitted with a pleasant personal note. Editors who go "third person" on their intimate friends and have their secretaries write "Mr. Numskull is sorry, but—" instead of "Dear Bill: This stuff won't do". Editors who send out word to regular contributors to wait a little, and then after forty-five minutes tell the girl outside to say that Mr. Numskull is, after all, too occupied to grant an interview. Editors who fall on your neck at the Club and rave over a contribution you have sent them, saying it's what they've wanted for aeons—and send it back two days later with no explanation, and no attention whatever to your subsequent "How-comes?" Editors who tell you they will be in the office until twelve o'clock and will be glad to see you—and then go out to lunch at 11.30 with no apology or excuse left behind to compensate for your forty-mile trip from Suburbia. Editors who write you to come in and discuss a proposed feature—their proposal—and keep you standing in a chairless cubby-hole of a "reception room" while they talk to you. (That one, however, was o.k. by me—in resentment I doubled the price, and got it.)

These are not just casual discourtesies, they are constant—like bad manners in the driver's seat. But far more unintelligent than motor-rudeness, which is directed at total strangers, while editorial bad manners slap the faces of those who make the magazines—which is bad business. As anybody but a numskull would know.

"But authors are a sensitive race—they make too much of these things." If authors really were a sensitive race they'd have been extinct long ago. But assume they are sensitive, wouldn't it be politic to smooth their antennae instead of breaking them off?

"Editors are very busy people, they can't see everybody." I don't know whether there is a word called "hooey" in the dictionary, but I know there is one called "buncombe".

Let me quote the late and beloved Fat Bill Johnstone, sometime Sunday Editor of the New York *World* in its days of greatest power and prosperity, and author of the Limpy stories of considerable renown a decade ago.

Said Bill: "An editor who is too busy to see any and everybody who may have something on the ball, is falling down on his job. If seeing ninety-nine would-be writers and artists is a waste of time, the hundredth leaves you with a profit. I see 'em all—and I do my other work too without undue strain. Any fool can keep the wrong people out of his paper, my job is to get the right ones in".

He got them, too. The list of those he gave a start is pretty near the table of contents of any magazine that specializes in big names. Furthermore, so long as Bill held down that chair he could have the best from any of those big names—at space rates. For authors are grateful. If Bill had time to be courteous, so have other editors.

But there is a much more serious charge against editorial ethics. And one to which authors never become inured, because it violates ordinary business rules. *The average editor does not keep his word.* True, he seldom gives it—wangling speculative stuff out of authors with no definite agreement being regarded as brilliant editorial achievement. But when he does give it, you can't count on it.

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In the writing trade I'm known as a dependable performer. Yet, time after time, after definite verbal agreement that if a scenario was satisfactory the material would be considered as on order—I have had the final stuff turned down. And never on the ground that the work itself wasn't my usual. Always with the regretful explanation that the ideas didn't seem so good as on their submission, or the material wasn't timely, now (though delivered when ordered). "You could sue me."

Once, at the suggestion of one of the editorial prima donnas, I did some stuff as outlined by her for his particular magazine for that immediate time. It would have no market elsewhere. Two weeks later it was returned with the information that Mr. Numskull had decided his own idea wasn't so hot, after all. And no offer to pay me even for my time.

Yet that editor wouldn't dream of telling his tailor he wanted a suit of a certain fabric, cut and style which nobody else could wear—and then reject and refuse to pay for the suit because he'd decided he didn't want that kind of suit after all. For tailors, unlike authors, are a sensitive race.

Lest these examples of numskullduggery might be considered personal peevishness I refer you to the files of the Authors' League or to Mr. William Hamilton Osborne, attorney for the League, and an author himself, for proofs of the prevalence of editorial instability in the spoken and the written word.

One of the most successful article writers in the country—you'd know his name instantly if I used it, which I won't—said to me recently, "I've quit. I've been thrifty and I had a little luck in the market, too. I've an income of $7500 a year and I'm satisfied. I made thirty to forty thousand a year out of article writing, but I'd rather have my seventy-five hundred and not have to deal with editorial so-and-sos any longer. They don't keep their word, they don't keep their contracts and their ethics—well, they ain't got no ethics. And no manners. I was treated better when I used to be a book agent than I have been in editorial offices".

Extreme and harsh language—but any free-lance article writer will echo it.

However, bad manners and bad ethics, though numskullish in their ultimate effect, are not sufficient proofs of incompetence. Difficult as they make the author's already thorny way he might still respect the perpetrators if they were otherwise adequate to their jobs. But they aren't. Editors are numskulls in their judgment of the material they publish. Their magazines succeed—where they do succeed—in spite of them, not because of them. Of course this isn't 100% true, any more than most of my other accusations are 100% true. But it is more than 50% true, and what I'm proving is that my opening statement is sound and not mere fury.

If editors were not numskulls they ought to know approximately what they want for their magazines, and they ought to recognize it when they get it. Do they?

I have just been going over the record of my *sold and published* manuscripts for the past two years. I took them as they came—A to Z. Stories, sketches, articles, essays, novelettes—both commissioned material and purely speculative. I found that out of one hundred and twenty-five manuscripts, twelve had been to more than thirty markets apiece—and then sold. Of this twelve, *nine were sold to magazines which had formerly rejected them*. One was sold to a market that had rejected it three times. Three had been rejected twice by the final buyer. The *total* number of manuscripts sold to editors who

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had tossed them back at me at least once was eighteen. Two manuscripts had made forty-two trips each and sold on the third round to a former rejecter. Two had been to thirty-eight markets—and sold the second round. And one had been sold—and profitably—to the *seventy-fourth* market attacked. The *average* number of submissions of these manuscripts was just over ten.

At first glance this may seem proof that I am a numskull author not to know my market better. Why didn't I send this stuff to the last place in the first place? In eighteen instances I did *just* that—and was turned down. The rest of the answer is that editors are so uncertain of their judgment and so unpredictable in their sudden enthusiasms and equally mercurial antipathies, that the first place your experience tells you to send a manuscript is just at that particular moment the last place you can sell it.

How can you figure them when an editor will turn down a story and then write you letters asking for "something like that" when the contribution appears somewhere else?

If it's their own ideas which govern them, why do they decline stuff on grounds of policy? If it's magazine policy that guides them, why will one editor be a steady buyer from a contributor, his successor never buy from that contributor, and *his* successor become a buyer again?

How *can* an author calculate on such a market?

Recently I made a laboratory test. I wrote ten manuscripts definitely designed for the particular policies, leanings, and prejudices of ten different periodicals.

Well, they're all sold now. *Not one of them to the original editor I selected.* Average number of submissions—nine. Should it take nine editors to make a man who knows his manuscripts?

If they know their business why was I four years in selling a certain manuscript which was bought by an editor who had turned it down three times—when its publication not only made a hit but altered the entire policy of the magazine? If they know their business why was my idea for a series of sketches pooh-poohed by an editor for three years—only to have him suggest such a series as his own idea at the end of the three years?

If they know their business why do they so often write "we had a rip-roaring time reading your story in this office, but we're afraid the average reader—"? If they didn't cultivate a superior attitude it might occur to them that if they had a rip-roaring time maybe the readers would too. If they know their business why did a friend of mine get back a manuscript from one of the editors of a magazine saying he was sorry but it was too highbrow for their readers, and get it back again a year later from another of that same staff saying he was sorry, but it was too lowbrow for their readers?

Once on a time I wrote a twenty-thousand word tale called *Adventure, Steady Boarder.* It began its travels, and continued them always accompanied by this brief note of explanation:

"Dear Mr. Numskull: The enclosed is a series of stories about the characters in a boarding house to show that the dullest of them have had their adventures. It must be considered wholly on its entertainment value and not as a conventional novelette." It went to twenty-six places before it landed. And at least half the editors informed me that my opus was "entertaining, but not a novelette".

After about the fifteenth rejection I happened to tell an editor of this experience. "I'd like to see that story," he said. "All right," sez I, "but remember it is a series of related incidents bound together only by the idea of

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adventure, and in no sense a conventional novelette." "That doesn't matter if it's sufficiently entertaining," he replied. "Let me read it."

Ripley me or not, ladies and gentlemen, he sent it back with this note: "Dear Anon: This is a nice thing you've done and enormously interesting, but you see it isn't a novelette and thus must go back to you".

(Oh yes, I sold it eventually—as a series of short stories!)

Once an editor wrote. "Dear Anon:—We're glad to take *Gobs of Gold* and check is enclosed. *Slews of Silver* which is also enclosed I think we have seen before".

My reply: "Dear Numskull: Thanks for the check. But why the pained surprise at seeing *Slews of Silver* again? You saw *Gobs of Gold* before, too—six months before you bought it!"

Once more let's shift from the particular to the general. I ask you to believe that I cite my own experiences only when they seem to me interesting illuminations of my general indictment.

Kenneth Roberts tells in the *Saturday Evening Post* how Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire*—one of the greatest if not *the* greatest romance ever written—was numskulled from one editor to another until Tarkington's sister fairly thrust it down the throat of the old *McClure's*. "The moron public", of which editors talk so much, knew it was great stuff the minute it appeared—any numskull but an editor can *feel* genius even if he can't pass a Binet test.

When one thinks of the immediate response of that same "moron public" to authors whom the editors take years to recognize, one is convinced that editors who try out stuff on the office boy and the telephone girl are guilty of the exercise of more than numskull intelligence.

You may think O. Henry was a great writer or a mere trickster—but he brought a fresh note into American literature and almost revolutionized the short story. Yet his early stories—and the early ones were among his best—got dog-eared travelling from big mag to big mag and were engulfed in the maw of the pulpwoods, which *have* to buy nearly everything that has plot and action to feed their presses. That's why editors of pulpwoods are always "discovering" authors. If they fill their mags they *have* to discover them. But they wouldn't have the chance if the "big" editors were as big as they're supposed to be, because every new author tries the big leagues first.

If editors weren't numskulls why did Joseph Hergesheimer have to wait twelve years for recognition—or even acceptance? Do you believe for one minute that everything he did in those twelve years was unworthy of publication?

If editors aren't numskulls why did Jack London have to struggle and starve for years to stir editors, when his stuff stirred the "moron public" the instant it began to appear? And if you believe none of his early stuff worth publication, read *Martin Eden* and learn how he sold it later at top Jack London prices. Did you know also that Jack—not when he was struggling, but when he had arrived—said that "Most editors are writers who have failed"?

Did you know that George Allan England, a first-rate craftsman if there ever was one, worked for ten or twelve years for the two-cent-a-word magazines before he had a glimmer of encouragement from the big mags? And that a cub reporter's story—which wasn't true—that England was going to quit writing in disgust and run a chicken farm—won him more offers from editors than all his honest work had ever accomplished?

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Did you know that Sam Merwin, co-author with H. K. Webster of *Calumet K* which took the country by storm, and author thereafter of many successful short stories, was told, after but two years' absence from the writing field as an editor, "We don't know you. Go get a reputation".

He went and got it, all over again, and the same scornful editors paid him fat prices, while Sam smiled his benign smile.

Did you know that the late C. E. Van Loan —best of sports-story writers—Arthur Somers Roche, and Leonard Nason—among many, were pulpwood slaves for years before they got even a nibble from the high-and-mighties, and that not one author in twenty gets a break from the "big" editors who are "searching always for material", until he has pounded his fingers flat for the little mags and the daily short-story syndicates?

Of course an author must serve an apprenticeship—and God knows most of us do. But that apprenticeship is on the average at least four years longer than it would be if editors half knew their business, if they weren't numskulls, and sheep-minded ones at that. They wait for the other fellow to make a discovery, and the other fellow waits for them. They'd rather keep ninety-nine lambs out of the fold than let one in. They are afraid of the advertiser, afraid of the publisher, afraid of taking a chance, afraid of ideas, and afraid of the public which they despise. They lunch with each other for fear they might be contaminated by some of that public, and hence they know nothing about it. They huddle in conferences over stories for fear they might publish one that somebody would dislike.

Once in a while one of them inadvertently gets something different and unusual into his magazine—and it scores a success. Then he goes on trying to repeat that exact kind of success and all the others tail after him. An editor moves from one magazine to another —and duplicates number one.

They have more taboos than a South African savage. Taboos on sex, or taboos on anything but sex. Taboos on religion, politics and sociology. Taboos, in fact, on anything which elicits three indignant letters from a circulation of a million. And taboos on taboos which some rarely courageous editor has demonstrated ain't so.

If they were really competent they would hold their jobs. So far as I recall, there is just one editor of one nationally circulated magazine who still sits where he sat twenty-five years ago. A number of them are dead. Some of them have stepped to bigger editorial jobs—but not many. The mortality of jobs among editors is higher than in any profession or business with which I am familiar—including even actors.

This may prove that publishers are difficult to work for, but to me it proves that most editors fall down on their jobs. And we authors suffer because of the everlasting shifts in personalities and policies due to that incompetence. The public suffers, too, because originality, freshness and vitality have to break through so much editorial incapacity to reach the reader.

There are splendid exceptions—but not many of them. There are editors whose courtesy and eagerness to give the beginner a chance are limitless. There are editors whose word is their bond—and it's a gilt-edged bond. There are editors with courage, initiative, imagination and true sensitiveness. And these noble exceptions are the manna in the author's desert. Without them we'd *all* be chicken farmers.

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# JOHN DOS PASSOS

## *by Granville Hicks*

ALTHOUGH *1919** is essentially of a piece with *The 42nd Parallel*, it does much to strengthen the conviction that John Dos Passos is the most considerable figure in contemporary American literature. *1919* not only displays the resourcefulness, the inventiveness, the force of its predecessor; it demonstrates Dos Passos's ability to execute an ambitious and elaborate design. What *Three Soldiers* barely hinted, what *Manhattan Transfer* merely suggested we might dare to hope, these two books make it altogether reasonable to assert: we now have an American writer capable of giving us our America. If the third volume of the trilogy is worthy of the first two, the assertion will scarcely be open to question.

For *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919* Dos Passos has devised a method that, simple as it fundamentally is, may require a word of explanation. What he is chiefly trying to do is to set forth the stories of a number of representative Americans. In *The 42nd Parallel*, Mac, Janey Williams, J. Ward Moorehouse, Eleanor Stoddard, and Charley Anderson are the principal characters: an I.W.W., a stenographer, a publicity agent, an interior decorator, a garage hand. In *1919* we find Joe Williams, Eveline Hutchins, Dick Savage, Daughter, and Ben Compton: a sailor, a minister's daughter, a Harvard graduate, an impulsive Texan, and a Jewish radical. Some of these characters are involved with others. Moorehouse's life touches the lives of Janey, who serves him as stenographer, of Eleanor, who becomes his mistress, of Eveline, who, through her association with Eleanor, meets and has a brief affair with him. At one point in *The 42nd Parallel* his life converges with Mac's, and in *1919* his story crosses the story of Dick Savage and Daughter.

Yet at the end of *1919* there are loose ends, and there may well be at the end of the trilogy. What holds these narratives together is not any web of intrigue nor any chain of circumstance. These persons belong together because they are being swept along by the same forces, a fact that Dos Passos indicates by interrupting the story of one to tell the story of another, and emphasizes by making his reader constantly aware of the background of broad social movements. In *The 42nd Parallel* the desire for self-discovery and self-expression, for some sort of certainty, and for success moves them all; and at the same time every one of them sweeps forward towards that declaration of war that is the climax of the volume. In *1919* these men and women, or such of them as we see in this book, are swept into the war, joining the ambulance corps, serving the Red Cross, transporting munitions, going to jail for resisting the draft. And they emerge from the war to perceive all the bitter restlessness and to share all the disillusionment of the post-war year.

To make us aware of this background, to give us the fullest possible sense of the mass emotions and actions that lie behind the comparatively few lives he has singled out to

* *1919* by John Dos Passos (Harcourt, Brace. $2.50).



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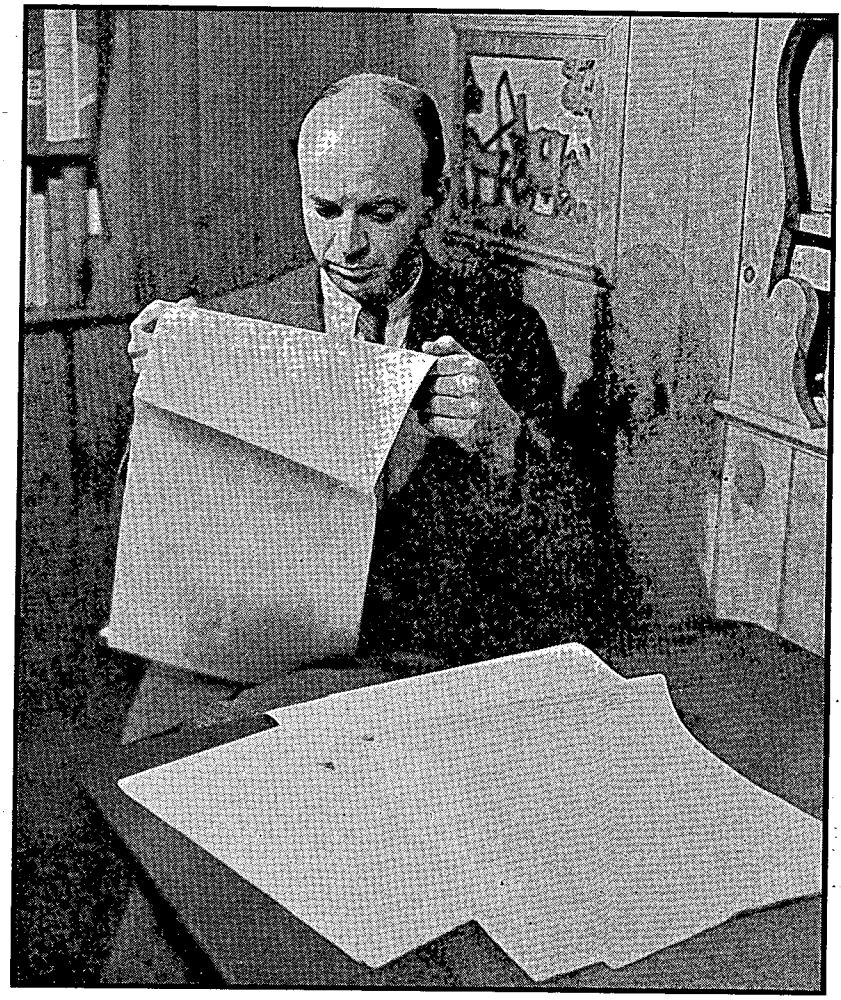

JOHN DOS PASSOS

*Reading the proofs of "1919" at his publishers' office.*

portray, Dos Passos employs three devices. First, there is the Newsreel, a collection of headlines, fragments of newspaper stories, snatches of popular songs, extracts from speeches. Scattered through the two books, nearly fifty of them in all, these Newsreels indicate the passing of time, define the popular mood, and act as a kind of official chorus, raucously commenting upon the events in which the characters take part. In the first Newsreel the twentieth century is being greeted, Oscar Wilde has just died, Mr. McKinley is hard at work, and there's a song that runs, "For there's many a man been murdered in Luzon". In the last, thirty-four die after drinking wood alcohol, Wall Street closes weak, a little Caruso is expected, and machine guns mow down mobs in Knoxville. Incoherent and even chaotic, they are the raw material of history, the actual and undigested stuff of experience, out of which the narrative sections have been fashioned.

To increase the effect, to plunge us even deeper into the current that is sweeping his

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men and women along, Dos Passos has scattered through the two volumes portraits of historical figures: Debs, Burbank, Haywood, Minor C. Keith, Carnegie, Edison, Steinmetz, La Follette, in *The 42nd Parallel*, heroes of the pre-war years, bewildered figures like their humble followers in the book; Jack Reed, Randolph Bourne, Roosevelt, Wilson, Morgan, Paxton Hibben, Joe Hill, Wesley Everest, and the Unknown Soldier in *1919*, men whom the war made, men whom the war broke. Extraordinary as are the portraits in *The 42nd Parallel*, those in *1919* surpass them. Records of human heroism, meanness, bewilderment, victory, defeat, written in such magnificent prose, harsh and poetic, slangy and rich, incoherent and packed with meaning! The best is, perhaps, the last, the Unknown Soldier:

in the tarpaper morgue at Chalons-sur-Marne in the reek of chloride of lime and the dead, they picked out the pine box that held all that was left of

enie menie minie moe plenty other pine boxes stacked up there containing what they'd scraped up of Richard Roe. . . .

John Doe was born (thudding din of blood in love into the shuddering soar of a man and a woman alone indeed together lurching into

and ninemonths sick drowse waking into scared agony and the pain and blood and mess of birth). John Doe was born. . . .

and the incorruptible skeleton,

and the scraps of dried viscera and skin bundled in khaki

they took to Chalons-sur-Marne

and laid it out neat in a pine coffin

and took it home to God's Country on a battleship

and buried it in a sarcophagus in the Memorial Amphitheatre in the Arlington National Cemetery

and draped the Old Glory over it

and the bugler played taps

and Mr. Harding prayed to God and the diplomats and the generals and the admirals and the brasshats and the politicians and the handsomely dressed ladies out of the society column of the *Washington Post* stood up solemn

and thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God's Country it was to have the bugler play taps and the three volleys made their ears ring.

The contribution of these portraits to the general effect of the work is incalculable. So tersely, so bitterly, so passionately written, they do more than create a background; they give the books something of epic scope. Here are the gods and demi-gods of our time, the Olympians with feet of clay, and the Promethean fighters against tyranny. It is almost a new mythology that Dos Passos has created.

Finally there is The Camera Eye, a device that makes the narrator part of the book without his resorting to fictional disguise, and that thus once more strengthens the effect of reality: he, John Dos Passos, has lived through these times. In *The 42nd Parallel* the "I" of the passages is remote from the scenes the book describes; he is a child catching echoes of the Boer War, a schoolboy going to church, an undergraduate reading *Dr. Faustus* and attending pop concerts. But in *1919* he is part of all that the book is concerned with, an ambulance driver, tending the wounded swimming in the Seine, rejoicing in the resumption of civilian status. The Camera Eye is frankly personal, impressionistic, lyrical; if it served no other purpose, it would enrich the books because of the contrast between its style and the strong, staccato, objective narrative of the story proper.

Useful each of these devices clearly is; the books would be poorer, would not be the same books, without them; but it is nevertheless upon the excellence of the main narrative sections that the success of the work depends. It has been easy, because of the importance of Dos Passos's experiments, to overlook the fact that he exhibits, in extraordinary degree

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the conventional virtues of the writer of fiction. What contemporary imparts to his readers so intimate and immediate an insight into character? What writer appeals so constantly and so successfully to eye and ear? Who else gives us such swift and irresistible narrative?

At the foundation of Dos Passos's achievement is the actual mass of his knowledge. Though there is never an obtrusive suggestion of documentation, he builds his narratives solidly out of concrete facts. In the presentation of these lives he may cover years in a few pages, but there is never an indication that the lives have passed beyond his control. The power of his imagination, operating upon a firm basis of experience, enables him to compress into his two volumes the materials of ten or a dozen novels, and this compression makes it possible for the work to assume temporal and spatial dimensions appropriate to its theme. He is freed from bondage to a single section or a single year. He can create in us an awareness of the immensity and diversity of the nation and a consciousness of the force and scope of the movements that swept it in the first two decades of the century.

Dos Passos's narrative is firm, rapid, objective. He spends no time in the analysis of his characters' minds, and gives them no opportunity publicly to dissect their souls. And yet we are always seeing events as a particular character sees them, feeling with him their emotional impact. This is no journalistic objectivity, revealing only what the camera could reveal. The desires, doubts, disillusionments of inarticulate Joe Williams reach us as surely as the complex longings and frustrations of Eveline Hutchins; the ponderous mental processes of J. Ward Moorehouse are laid before us as deftly and convincingly as the naïve responses of Charley Anderson. Dos Passos can describe Dick Savage's loss of his liberal convictions as swiftly as he describes Anne Trent's loss of her virginity, and we understand what, so far as character is concerned, is implied in both events.

It is stylistic skill that permits Dos Passos to make his rapid narrative so revealing. Only Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway approach his mastery of the American idiom, and neither is familiar with the idiom of so many different sections and classes. When he writes of Joe Williams, his style is as terse as a sailor's speech and his vocabulary as restricted. "It was a lousy trip", one section begins. "Joe was worried all the time about Del and about not making good and the deckcrew was a bunch of soreheads." But when he writes of Eveline Hutchins, he suggests her middle-class background, the social aspirations of her family, the intellectual pretensions of her clerical father. Even within the section the style changes, adapting itself to the character's age. An incident of Eveline's childhood begins: "On the groundfloor was the drawingroom and the diningroom, where parishioners came and little children must be seen and not heard, and at dinnertime you could smell good things to eat and hear knives and forks and tinkly companyvoices and Yourfather's booming scary voice and when Yourfather's voice was going all the companyvoices were quiet". The account of Ben Compton's career suggests bitterness, strain, and at times brutality: "The deputies made two lines down towards the railroad track. They grabbed the wobblies one by one and beat them up. Three of them grabbed Ben. 'You a wobbly?' 'Sure I am you dirty yellow . . .' he began. The sheriff came up and hauled off to hit him. 'Look out he's got glasses on.' A big hand pulled the glasses off. 'We'll fix that.' Then the sheriff punched him in the nose with his fist, 'Say you ain't' ".

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By creating for each section a style that is absolutely right for the person with whom the section is concerned, Dos Passos contrives to make each of the many events he describes personal and significant. Even the minor characters are robustly alive, from the various seamen of Joe Williams's acquaintance to the hangers-on at the Peace Conference. That is, without doubt, the greatest of Dos Passos's gifts, for if he could merely portray mass movements and the march of events, his importance would be as an historian rather than as a novelist. But it must be remembered, on the other hand, that, if his characters were isolated individuals, unrelated in his account of them to the basic forces in our life, he could lay little claim to being a recorder of the American scene. His distinction lies in the fact that he has not found it necessary to sacrifice either virtue to the other. He treats his characters as entities and as parts of a larger whole; he lets us see their acts as intimately personal and as significantly social; he makes their hopes and sufferings real and moving and at the same time unfolds the larger drama in which they are the merest supers. This is the kind of world we know, in which our problems are so absorbing and yet count for so little; but it is a world organized and meaningful as we have not perceived ours to be.

How has Dos Passos achieved this? What road has he followed? Rich as his experience and keen as his observation have been, they scarcely explain the magnitude of the advance he has made over the whole tradition of realistic fiction in America. From Howells on we have had astute observers of the American scene. Crane knew the slums when he wrote *Maggie*; Norris knew the California wheat growers when he wrote *The Octopus*; Phillips, Dreiser, Sinclair, all of them pushed their way into the darkest corners to see for themselves what went on; Lewis has noted every gesture, every trick of speech, of the middle-class American. If Dos Passos has surpassed them, it is not because he has seen more, it is because what he has seen has meant more to him. The failure of the earlier realists came not, in most cases, from any ignorance of the facts, but from inability to hold the facts together, to relate them to each other. Dos Passos's superiority arises from his dual achievement: he has perceived relationships that his predecessors could not see, and he has discovered new forms that permitted him to say what he had to say.

When we turn to Dos Passos's earliest work, to his contributions to the *Harvard Monthly*, we find little enough that seems indicative, romantic short stories with an O. Henry twist, a free-verse poem, a mediocre editorial; but there is one contribution, an article called *A Humble Protest*, that reminds us of the Dos Passos we know. Published in the month that its author was graduated, it represents, one assumes, the point to which his four college years had brought him. The protest is against industrialism, which he attacks because it is enslaving mankind, enslaving the workers by committing them to degrading tasks, enslaving all men by subjecting them to the tyranny of things. It is Emersonian in this insistence that so many of the products of the machine age are useless, and in the remedy it proposes, too, for we are to free ourselves from the curse of industrialism by reasserting the value of plain living and high thinking. "Are we not", the essay asks, "like men crouching on a runaway engine? And at the same time we insensately shovel in the fuel with no thought as to where we are being taken."

Four years later Dos Passos published his first book, *One Man's Initiation—1917*. By

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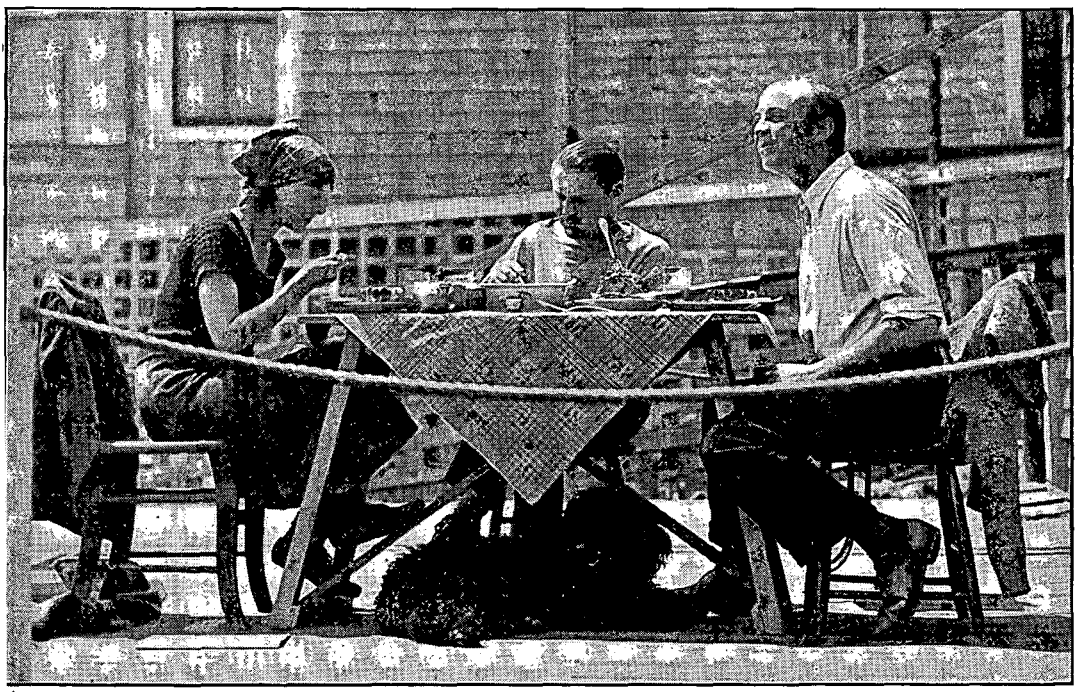
that time he had seen a good deal more of that runaway engine, our industrial civilization, and had seen in what a frightful holocaust its wild progress might end. The effect of the war on Dos Passos is incalculable; it has dominated his thinking, made itself felt in all his books, shaped his life. And yet *One Man's Initiation* is not hysterical, makes no attempt to be harrowing. It is quiet, thoughtful, sincere, full of a patient desire to understand. There are echoes of the Harvard essay in it, passages in praise of monastic calm and natural beauty. There was even, one feels as one reads it, a strong possibility that the author, loathing all the squalor of modern life, might somewhere seek a sanctuary for his poetic soul. "God!" the autobiographical hero says to himself. "If there were somewhere nowadays where you could flee from all this stupidity, from all this cant of governments, and this reiteration of hatreds, this strangling hatred." The temptation was strong, and the war, by revealing the brutality of the forces that militate against civilized life, had made it stronger. But the war had also roused in Dos Passos a conflicting desire, a desire to understand and to change the system that had made that horror possible. Already he was asking himself questions, and listening hopefully to those who believed they had answers. Side by side the two impulses grew, struggling for victory; and on the outcome of that struggle depended Dos Passos's career as a novelist.

It is perhaps because he has felt the impulse to retreat from all that life in an industrial society involves that Dos Passos writes so sympathetically of his contemporaries; it is certainly because he has triumphed over the impulse that he rises above the morbid defeatism so common in his generation. *Three Soldiers* shows us the first step in that conquest.



Acme

*John Dos Passos with Mrs. Dos Passos and her brother, W. B. Smith, at the writer's home, Provincetown, Massachusetts.*

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He had seen too much, and felt too deeply the horror of what he had seen, to be content merely to tell his personal story. Recognizing that the account of a single life could not epitomize the war, he used for the first time the episodic method that has been the basis of all his experiments. Already the problem of presenting simultaneously the unity and the diversity of human experience was clear in his mind. Three men, quite different in their ways of life, their hopes, their standards, go down to the same defeat.

In *Three Soldiers* Dos Passos achieved objective narrative. There is nothing of him or of his problems in Fuselli or Chrisfield. But of Andrews that cannot be said. A composer, a poet, he dreams, like Martin Howe in *One Man's Initiation* and like Dos Passos himself, of discovering somewhere a refuge from everything in life that thwarts the expression of the creative impulse. That side of Dos Passos still had to have its say; he had to set forth his own dreams and dissatisfactions in the hope that thus his imagination might be purged. And so long as it was necessary for him to make his books serve a therapeutic purpose, he was not free to create a living world.

Not all at once nor without great effort could Dos Passos achieve the victory. In fact, in *Three Soldiers* he seems to have spent for the moment such resources as he had for the objective analysis of the world about him. In *Rosinante to the Road Again* the nostalgia for a machineless world, for a world in which *lo flamenco* flourishes, catches him again and again. In his other and better travel book, *Orient Express,* he writes most warmly when he writes of the joyously brave and simple life in the desert. In his poems, *A Pushcart at the Curb,* he seeks glimpses of the picturesque, writes odes to ennui, and protests against dull standardization. And in *Streets of Night*, the one novel of this period and the poorest of his books, defeatism is dominant: one character commits suicide, and another devotes himself to the study of the Renaissance.

But we must not suppose that the other impulse had wholly vanished when he wrote these books. His eyes were open, and he wrote with uncommon descriptive vigour in *Orient Express*. In Spain his admiration for *lo flamenco* did not blind him to the conditions of the workers nor dull his interest in the labour movement. The basic aim of *A Pushcart at the Curb* is to cultivate the poetic possibilities of the commonplace. Dos Passos was still aware of the world about him, still ready to voice his hatred of its ugliness and injustice, still capable of responding eagerly to any suggestion for its humanization.

At the end of five years, when the horror of war had somewhat burned away, he was ready to take a long look at this world he had hated and sometimes fled from. The result was *Manhattan Transfer*. Since by this time it was quite clear to him that the conventional novel could not represent the complexities of American life, he built his book out of some two hundred episodes, dealing with fifty or sixty persons, recurring again and again to some and carrying them through several years, giving only the briefest glimpses of others. He piled episode upon episode, telling of reporters, actresses, waiters, politicians, milkmen, lawyers, bootleggers, sailors, housewives. Uniting them there is a basic rhythm, an underlying movement—beginning, struggle, bewilderment, defeat. He summoned all his powers of description, all his knowledge of character, and packed into one book a richness of life that pounds upon the reader's sense with the irresistibility of the composite din that daily strikes the metropolitan ear.

Dos Passos had achieved the kind of representative complexity that he knew was

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right, but for its sake he had sacrificed much; we know few of the characters well enough to care what happens to them. He achieved, too, the sense of drift that he wanted to achieve; but he failed to indicate the direction of the drift. In reading *Manhattan Transfer* one feels that it is almost a great novel. What stands in the way of definitely satisfying accomplishment is suggested perhaps by the bewilderment of Jimmy Herf, who comes closest to being the author's counterpart and spokesman. When Jimmy leaves New York, we feel with him a temporary sense of relief; but we know well enough that his departure is no real solution of his own problems and that it can have no bearing upon the problems of the other characters, still struggling in the megalopolitan wilderness. Based on a bitterness that finds no outlet in action, culminating in a retreat that is a confession of futility, *Manhattan Transfer* leaves us only with a recollection of isolated scenes, and with an impression that its author has seen but has not understood.

Two plays come between *Manhattan Transfer* and *The 42nd Parallel*. *The Garbage Man*, in its attempt to reproduce the chaos of modern life and to catch the glamorous spectacle that it makes, is close to the former novel and ends quite as unsatisfactorily. Not so interesting a play, *Airways, Inc.* is far more important as a document in the record of Dos Passos's growth. As drama it is bad, simply because it is over-ambitious. You cannot deal with a strike, the evils of commercialism, the sex-life of the young, the helplessness of the old, the tradition of European radicalism, and the motives of an intellectual who participates in labour agitation, all in a three-act play. But the play is a fighting play, free from romanticism and doubt. At last Dos Passos is willing to face America because he has faith that out of the squalid chaos a decent civilization may come. When one believes that the horrible can be defeated, when one has good reasons for that belief, feels it deeply as a challenge, acts upon it as a philosophy of life, then one need no longer think of flight.

It is in that spirit that Dos Passos has written *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919*. The form he has contrived permits him, as has been shown, to give us the sense of personal struggle and individual significance that *Manhattan Transfer* failed to give us, at the same time that it allows him to reveal even more fully and convincingly the totality of American life. But what is it that the form expresses? What is it that holds together these seven or eight narratives, these innumerable newspaper extracts, these autobiographical passages, these tabloid biographies? Is it not simply his recognition that all of us, sailors and stenographers, interior decorators and publicity agents, J. P. Morgan and Wesley Everest, Charles Proteus Steinmetz and Woodrow Wilson, have been moving steadily toward a great crisis? It is, in short, his catching of the revolutionary vision that has given John Dos Passos this insight. Of course, the vision would be meaningless, so far as literature is concerned, were it not for his tremendous talents, talents that in any case were bound to make themselves felt. But these talents have been intensified by being focussed upon a great end. He not only understands what he sees, he actually sees more clearly, because this searchlight has been thrown upon the surrounding darkness. Precisely as the scientist's hypothesis enhances his powers of observation by giving him a principle of selection, so this concept, deeply realized in the emotions and translated into action, has given Dos Passos a sharper insight. And it has banished, at last, all the dismay and doubt that, subtly insinuating themselves despite his efforts to dispel them, have sapped the vitality of his imagination.

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The particular devices Dos Passos employs in *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919* are more or less arbitrary and personal. For other writers different devices might serve the same purpose. But the perceptions to which the devices correspond are fundamental. In such a time as this, when the structure of society is far from stable and the ties that bind men together are not easily discerned, the novelist must perceive and present an explicit pattern. He cannot occupy himself with isolated individuals and assume that his readers will see their relation to a larger whole. He must do what his readers unaided cannot do; that is, he must visualize the interrelation of the parts. And the explication of this perception, its embodiment in terms of the concrete experiences of representative persons, is form.

In achieving this sort of perception and presenting it in this sort of form, Dos Passos has done precisely what, for the past sixty years, a group of American writers, and perhaps our most important group, has been trying to do. When William Dean Howells began writing his little sketches of suburban life, he laid the foundation for *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919*. As his capacities and ambitions grew, he attempted fuller expressions of American complexity, until in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, he linked in one novel the stories of a dozen of his countrymen, millionaires, reformers, journalists, artists, expatriated southerners, nostalgic New Englanders, uncomfortable middle-westerners. But why they were all in New York, what it was they all had in common, what forces moved through their so varied lives, what, in short, the pattern was that warranted him in bringing them together, that he could not discover. They all happened, of course, to be directly or indirectly concerned with a particular magazine, and, as he said in another novel, he could only trust that what seemed to be chance was really providence. But the pattern that only God can perceive is not of much use to the finite novelist.

The problem that Howells could not solve remained to disturb his successors. The realistic novel grew in strength, as Howells's prudery yielded to the frankness of Crane and Dreiser and Anderson, and as the limitations of his experience were transcended by Norris and Phillips and Lewis. The novel became more and more inclusive and more and more exact, until it seemed that all the important elements of American life had found their way into our fiction. But the problem of meaning, the problem of form, remained. Frank Norris substituted for Howells's providence a mystical conception of natural forces that brought good out of human suffering. Theodore Dreiser, honestly admitting that he found no meaning in life, calmly accepted the literary consequences of refusing to impose meaning upon his fiction. The muckraking novelists, filled with a vague hope of approaching glory, tried to conceal their essential bewilderment by attributing to their petty reforms a universal significance. Sinclair Lewis, brilliantly exposing the stupidities of the masses by contrasting them with his own state of enlightenment and sophistication, trusted his readers not to perceive how far he was from any satisfactory interpretation of the life he so faithfully portrayed. Each of these novelists attracted readers, who, finding the life they knew so convincingly set forth, read on and on in the hope that their own darkness was about to be dispelled. Always these readers were disappointed. The fallacies and inadequacies of this group of writers not only revealed themselves to cold analysis; they could be felt by the most casual reader, whose inner conflicts the books sharpened without resolving.

What his predecessors, from Howells to

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Lewis, failed to do, Dos Passos has done. Many readers may not recognize it. Some will see the chaos without perceiving the underlying order. Others, more consciously critical, will so shrink from the intellectual implications of his attitude that they will refuse to yield themselves to his aesthetic triumph. But there are readers, and there will be an increasing number of them, who, whether they can define their response or not, will gain from *The 42nd Parallel* and *1919* an aesthetic satisfaction, an emotional fulfilment, that is not dependent upon doctrinal agreement. They will recognize that here is not merely a keen observer, a master of narrative, a fine poet; here, they will see, is a man who restores literature to its high standing as interpretation of life.

For whom of Dos Passos's contemporaries can the same claim be made? Not, certainly, for Elizabeth Madox Roberts or Glenway Wescott. The former, though she wrote one book of singular beauty, has clearly demonstrated, in the four failures with which she has followed it, that a sensitiveness to the poetry of country folk cannot sustain a career in fiction, can only lead, unless it is somehow reënforced, to the elegiac and diffused romanticism of *The Great Meadow* or to the marginal quaintness of *A Buried Treasure*. The latter, also failing to reproduce the beauty of his first novel, has repudiated the American scene to write "about ideal people under ideal circumstances", who have "the ease of mature and healthy plants in a well-kept garden". Like Thornton Wilder, Wescott has nothing to offer Americans except a refuge for the fortunate and the weary.

With Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, who are undeniably writers of talent, the case is only slightly better. Hemingway has deliberately chosen to write of his own world, the world of bullfighters and boxers, aristocratic sportsmen and alcoholic expatriates. It is a world in which men and women have abandoned the effort to think, and, indeed, have devoted their lives to the discovery of devices that will make thought unnecessary. One notes with regret that, after making a half-hearted effort to break away from this world in *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway plans to devote his next book to what is for him the most efficacious of opiates, bullfighting.

Faulkner isolates himself even more completely in a world of his own creation. Why it is not hard to see. The South has struggled now for nearly a century against forces that have steadily subdued it, destroyed its old standards, crushed the kind of culture it had carefully sustained. Faulkner, objectifying the southern malaise, which might in itself seem too petty for tragic treatment, builds an unreal world of terror in which all the frustrations and bewilderments of his own nature are made fantastic and horrible by the strange power of his imagination. For those who, like him, are caught in the collapse of a long-established civilization, he offers emotional release by transmuting the wearisome struggle into a mysterious melodrama.

Escape of one sort or another—that is what these writers can give their fellow Americans. But we need stronger medicine than that, and they need a firmer basis for literary achievement. After all, perhaps the clearest demonstration of the unsoundness of the attitude that dominates their writing lies in the fact that there is already evidence of the dissolution of their talents. With Elizabeth Madox Roberts the whole process of literary decay lies before us. From Wilder and Wescott there is little to hope except a more exquisite prose. Hemingway has squeezed dry the world of harshness and futility to which he has thus far devoted himself, and even his

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admirers wonder if he can go farther unless he goes in a different direction. Faulkner, permitting artificiality and melodrama to play an increasingly large part in his work, is in constant danger of losing his already tenuous contact with reality.

Dos Passos, on the other hand, has gained steadily during the last decade, and there is no apparent obstacle to his continued growth. Even *1919*, though it is so much like *The 42nd Parallel*, shows, in many minor ways, his progress as an artist. Surely this growth is not merely a personal matter, a question of temperament or constitution. It is the result of his continued struggle against those tendencies in himself that might have persuaded him to adopt any of the short-cuts to artistic salvation of which his contemporaries have availed themselves. He might very easily have said to himself that the life of metropolitan, industrial America was too horrible to be faced, too violently hostile to the creative impulses to be endured. But he refused to admit defeat, exposed himself to every unsightly aspect of our civilization, and saw at last a way in which all the horror and ugliness could be accepted without sacrifice of truth or diminution of art.

Dos Passos still has his faults. His sense of diversity is stronger than his sense of unity, leading him sometimes to mistake chaos for complexity. He is so afraid of the kind of selection that is based on prejudice that his criterion occasionally becomes quantitative rather than qualitative. The idiomatic richness of his style does lapse now and then into banality, and his Joycean manipulation of words, especially in The Camera Eye, serves at times only to interrupt the lucid swiftness of his narrative. He has yet to master the whole body of revolutionary theory, which can render him even more extraordinary service than it thus far has. He very much needs to expose himself more fully to the proletarian point of view, so that he can reveal the chaos of industrialism as searchingly as he reveals the chaos of war, and so that he can present the ordinary worker as convincingly as he presents the bourgeois intellectual or the radical labour leader.

But these are, compared with his achievements, minor faults, whose elimination it is not unreasonable to assume. One expects Dos Passos to shake off his faults because one can see in him forces making for literary growth. The prospects of literature, in circumstances such as the present, cannot be bright, but if there is any hope it is in Dos Passos and the men who, though they do not equal him in achievement, are comparable with him in promise. In the decade ahead literary lines are likely to be more sharply drawn than ever. The mood of futility is strong in our literature and will be stronger. Rejecting this mood, some writers may swing farther to the right, adopting one or another form of orthodoxy. That either position can give an author strength enough to endure or insight enough to understand the ordeal through which this generation is almost certain to pass there is little reason to believe. Already such simple qualities in Dos Passos as vigour and courage seem so unusual as to be almost miraculous. As time goes on and we watch men not improbably equal to him in natural endowment fall by the wayside, the miracle will seem all the greater; but perhaps by then the explanation will not be difficult to see.

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# LOUIS BROMFIELD: NOVELIST

## *by Louise Maunsell Field*

In no other of our younger American novelists is respect for the rich traditions of the Anglo-Saxon novel so well balanced by a fondness for experiment as in Louis Bromfield. All novel-writing worthy the name is of course an experiment in the presentation of character, since no two people ever react in quite the same manner to any mental or emotional stimulus. But this type of experimentation is by no means the only one tried by Mr. Bromfield, though no writer of today has drawn a greater variety of people, or more radically different social backgrounds. Profoundly influenced by Dickens, Thackeray and Balzac, whose books he absorbed during impressionable teens, he has nevertheless, and especially in his more recent work, experimented adventurously with form, while always maintaining the supreme importance of character and background.

Every one of his novels has, to use his own words, "had its birth in a character or set of characters against a background. . . . When I started to write, and ever since with an increasing urgency, I was aware first of all of the whole spectacle rather than any individual character or story". In that first so amazingly lavish novel, *The Green Bay Tree*, a small group held the center of the stage, but about that group, affecting it and affected by it, was an entire social structure, the typical life of a typical American town of a particular kind. The second and no less amazingly lavish novel, *Possession*, was to some extent dominated by a single character, whose self-centered ruthlessness battered its way to isolation. But *Early Autumn, A Good Woman, The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg, 24 Hours*, are all definitely group novels, the group becoming, in each, larger, more varied and less coherent, while in *A Modern Hero* Pierre Radier is himself the central magnetic force drawing a number of very dissimilar people together.

These groups, these people, are predominantly female. Mr. Bromfield is obviously a good deal more interested in the drawing of women than he is in men. He presents them more vividly, in greater number, and with far more of careful detail. *The Green Bay Tree*, his first published novel, which appeared in 1924, had half a dozen finely conceived and strikingly presented women; its men were less clearly seen, far less strikingly presented, typical rather than individual. The Governor, a handsome, resounding shell of a man, Krylenko, the idealized labour leader, have little or nothing of the flesh-and-blood quality of the Shane women. And what is true of *The Green Bay Tree* is true to some degree of every book he has written. Cyrus Spragg is intentionally a legendary rather than a living figure, and the pitiful Philip Downes of *A Good Woman* is more womanish than masculine. With Pierre Radier, in his new book *A Modern Hero*, he has evidently decided to make a change. Pierre he describes as "an immigrant adventurer, unscrupulous, full of vitality and ambition, ruthless, and disarmingly attractive, embodying in himself



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LOUIS BROMFIELD

many of the ideals relating to wealth, power and mere activity which are unfortunately so much a part of the education and ideology of America to-day".

All this Pierre is, and does. Yet despite the interesting detail, the shifts of background, each colourful, vivid, convincing, the many contrasts provided by his evolution from a bareback rider in a travelling circus, through the management of a bicycle repair shop to the manufacture of motor cars and at last to wealth and the power wealth confers, it is not Pierre the reader remembers best, but the women who influenced him, and whose lives he influenced. He is shown almost though not quite exclusively in his relations with his mother, his numerous mistresses, and his wife. Occasionally, Mr. Bromfield realizes the necessity of telling the reader something of Pierre's experiences in business and with other men; but he seems to do so only because he feels it necessary, not because he is interested in that particular phase of his hero's life.

Mr. Bromfield, to quote his own words once more, declares that "the business of living and the relations between people have always been fascinating to me", and this is what gives his books much of their richness, their wide sympathy, the impression they produce of people with connections, and past history, and a multiplicity of complex relations which does a great deal towards making them stand out as they do among modern novels, and especially among modern American novels, whose characters seem so often to have "just growed", and that with the rapidity of Jack's beanstalk. But though he has presented so many phases and periods of that American life he finds so exceptionally full of interesting material, the relationships with which he has shown himself most at home are those of men with women and of women with one another; not of men with one another. Pierre it is true finds a friend in Müller, but Müller's idolatrous worship of Pierre has in it a pronounced feminine quality and is important merely as it permits Pierre to swindle him with ease and safety. The only other man who comes in close relationship with Pierre is Homer Flint, his father-in-law, and this relationship too is important in a mechanical sense more than in any other, besides being largely conditioned by the character of Hazel, who is the link between the two.

But turn now to the women of *A Modern Hero*, to their effect upon Pierre and upon one another, and instantly you are conscious of a wealth of vitality, of a warm, swiftly flowing current of life, of an abundance of individuality. Madame Azaïs, the passionate woman, once a famous leopard tamer, who was Pierre's mother; the soft, flaccid German Léah Ernst, a born kept-woman, who became

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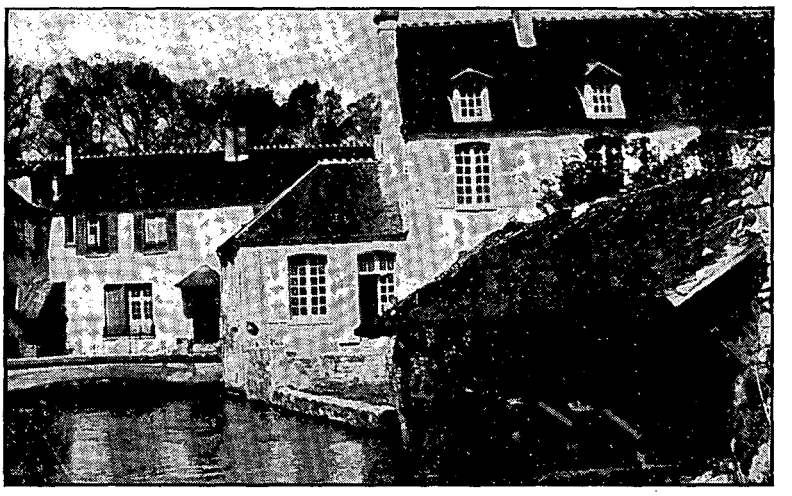
his mistress; the ex-prostitute, dealer in theatrical costumes, Big Clara, in whose house his child was born of the girl Joanna, who was strong enough to realize that deeply as she loved him, her place was not with him; sharply contrasted with these, the poor starved neurotic Hazel, who became his wife—every one of them is a real person, seen and drawn in the round. Only Claire, the vicious product of old New York and present-day Park Avenue, fails to come alive. The history of each of these women is told by itself, in direct narrative form, a veritable short story frankly embedded in the structure of the novel, and a short story, moreover, which contains ample material for a novel. Pierre is the central figure of the book, his history is its main concern, yet it is he who becomes interesting in and because of his association with these women, not they because of their association with him. He is strong, we are told. He does as he pleases, loving no one, considering no one but himself. He brushes aside whatever he has finished with, no matter whether it is a business or a woman, but somehow we never feel conscious of his forcefulness as we do of that of old Madame Shane, or Emma Downes or Savina Jerrold, or many other of Mr. Bromfield's notable women. Pierre's desire for financial success is something we hear a good deal about, but see almost entirely in the light of his relations with Joanna and Léah and Hazel and the rest, just as the ideals he embodies are shown manifesting themselves principally in his treatment of women. The drama of his business life, save for one or two scenes with his father-in-law, takes place off-stage. Not, one feels, because Mr. Bromfield is unable to bring it upon the scene, but because he is unwilling. He is not interested in it, as he is interested in, for instance, the career of Léah Ernst, who somehow contrived always to remain "respectable". It is the feminine, rather than the masculine side of life he cares for most.

Different as they are in type and background, this preference appears nevertheless in all Mr. Bromfield's books. Where the center of a novel is a woman or a group of women, this dwelling upon what may be called the woman's world is less noticeable, though these women may have as little in common as Emma Downes, the Good Woman who is at once one of the best drawn and most detestable characters in modern fiction, and the generous, lovely Olivia of the Pulitzer

FIFTY MINUTES FROM PARIS

*Louis Bromfield's house in Senlis, department of the Oise.*



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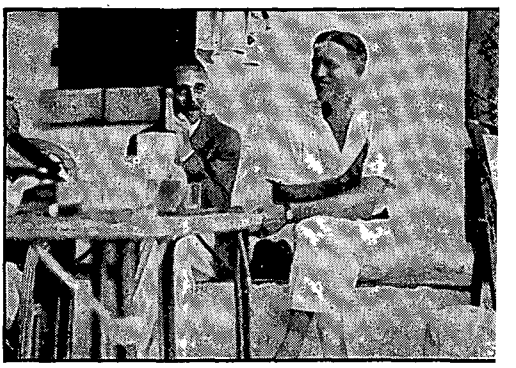
*The Bromfield garden at Senlis overlooks the river Nonette.*

prize novel, *Early Autumn*, a lady in the best sense of that much misused word, and one of the few among Mr. Bromfield's female characters who are at once chaste and lovable. For Mr. Bromfield, in so many ways a thoroughly individual writer, pursuing his own way in calm disregard of literary fads and "movements", seems to share to some extent in the theory so popular at present, that if a woman has the one virtue which has appropriated the name to itself, she is not likely to possess any other.

Born in 1896 in Mansfield, Ohio, with a Boston strain in his ancestry, serving in the French Army during the World War, living afterwards, first in Paris, then in New York, and now in France again, Mr. Bromfield has assimilated several cultures, an appreciation of several points of view. From the old French house in which he lives, a house once the *presbytère* of the thirteenth-century chapel which still stands at one end of the lovely garden, he keeps in touch, not only with the French life of which he has written so sympathetically, but with America also; this latter through the medium of the thirty-two American newspapers and magazines he not merely subscribes for but even finds time to read, as well as through the numerous visitors who come over the week-ends. Writing three or four hours a day, working in his garden another three or four hours, reading a great deal and seeing many interesting people, it is easy to agree with him that he has found the ideal life for a writer—spacious, unhurried, undistracted by noise, machinery or crowds.

It is the ideal life, particularly for a writer who is intensely alive, intensely energetic both physically and mentally. Mr. Bromfield believes whole-heartedly in the importance of technique, believes that the business of the author is to tell an interesting story in an interesting way, which implies plenty of hard work. With little sympathy for the man



*On the terrace at Senlis.*

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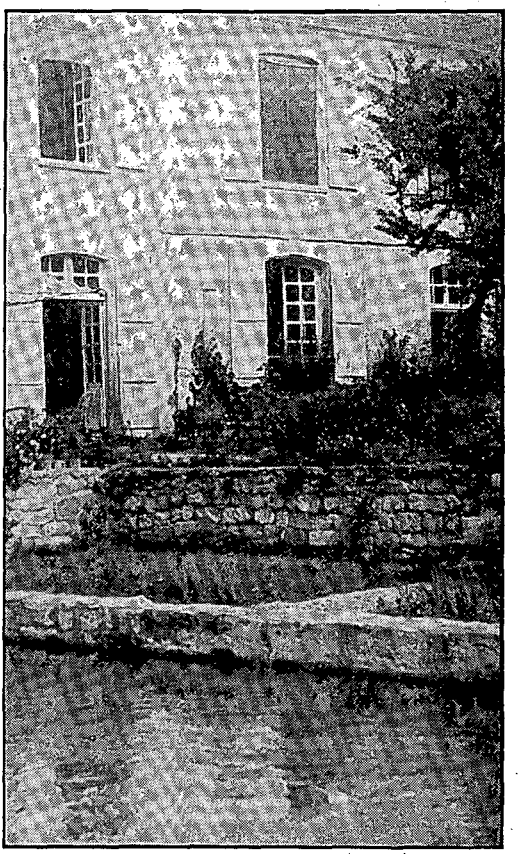
who, having achieved some degree of success, slip into an easy groove or find some formula they repeat over and over again, he is constantly experimenting with form. The complex, difficult construction of *Miss Annie Spragg* has little in common with the straightforward narrative of *The Green Bay Tree*. *24 Hours*, in which a dozen or more aspects of New York life pass rapidly in review during the period of a single day and night, was a *tour-de-force*, while *A Modern Hero*, with its numerous interpolated short stories cutting sharply across the stream of the narrative, marks another and more unusual departure in form.

In form, not in style. Mr. Bromfield is frankly uninterested in style for its own sake. Simplicity and clarity are what he aims at, the final revision of each novel being made with these two points specially in view, but he greatly prefers the writer who has a good deal to say, and says it clumsily, to the artist in words who has but little to say, and says that little beautifully.

He has himself a good deal to say, and as book succeeds book, he says it better and better, more simply, more directly. The repetitions, the over-emphasis and occasional long-windedness which marred the earlier novels, *Possession* especially, are disappearing, though the lavish use of material which made many wonder whether his first novel would not also be his last still exists, and exists to such an extent that every book he has written contains enough to suffice a more niggardly story-teller for half a dozen volumes.

"Story-teller" is used advisedly. For Mr. Bromfield holds fast to the tradition of the Anglo-Saxon novel, the tradition of a tale to tell, as well as a set of characters to present. Background and character, or more often a group of characters are, he says, the first part of the coming book to take shape in his mind. As they grow more and more real, more and more vivid to him, they begin to do things, until presently the novel arranges its own story. Never does the plot come first; always it grows out of characters and background. Which is one reason why a Bromfield novel is a living organism, not something put together from non-sentient material. The "Town" with which most of the earlier



*The windows are ten feet high, and many of the panes still keep their antique glass.*

"escape" novels were more or less connected, and which in *A Modern Hero* receives the name of Pentland, is as real a place to the reader as the New York which is at once the scene and the leading motif of *24 Hours*, a book in which the usually invisible and often unknown threads which bind Park Avenue,

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the Bowery and the Bronx together are well brought out; though *24 Hours*, with its rather weak climax, is not the most successful of its author's novels.

But then one of the many factors which place Mr. Bromfield among the most stimulating of our modern novelists is that each of his books, however interesting, however satisfying it may be, leaves you with the feeling that the most successful book is still to come. The tall, broad-shouldered intensely alive man who is Louis Bromfield, with his quick sympathy, his complete lack of self-consciousness or pose, his generosity of thought and speech, his delight in praising the work of his contemporaries as well as that of the mighty dead at whom it is only just now becoming unfashionable to sneer, retains, and probably always will retain, his intense interest and faith in what the writer to whose work his own is perhaps most nearly spiritually akin, has called the "Human Comedy".

*Mr. and Mrs. Bromfield and one of their children.*

Although that part of the Comedy in which he has thus far been most interested has been the woman's side of the drama, the backgrounds he has chosen have given scope for much implicit comment on different phases of American life. *The Green Bay Tree* stood sharply outlined against the struggles going on in the "Town", struggles of capital and labour, of the new against the old. Religious hysteria had an important part in moulding *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg*; the slow death of a tradition and its accompanying ideal was a determining influence in *Early Autumn*; while *A Modern Hero* tacitly condemns certain present-day ideas and ideals. No modern American novelist has dealt with more varied aspects of our national life than has Louis Bromfield, nor shown a keener sense of its pulsing drama. Yet much as he has already accomplished, it seems entirely probable that he will in the future accomplish a great deal more.

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# IS IT RASH TO MARRY AN AUTHOR?

*by Osbert Burdett*

HITHERTO we have been discussing the Other Side of authorship as it presents itself to a writer occupied in the little daily problems arising out of his work; but, clearly, the more a man is pinpricked by semi-personal problems the more likely he is to become a problem himself to anyone whose fate it is to live under the same roof with him. What of his wife, if he be married? What of any woman, whether friend or housekeeper, who shares domestic life with him?

Is it rash to marry an author? (The problem of marrying an authoress, having complications specially its own, is better deferred.)

Before we, inconsiderately, answer "Frightfully rash", let us remember two things. However rash any marriage may be, it is not so rash as birth. Secondly, marriage is an experience which is expected to happen to everybody; and, in these days, there is a polish, and perhaps a democratic, tendency to magnify a false humility about ourselves, and for men, at least, to pretend in public—the tendency is less conspicuous in private—that it is becoming to appear in the guise of a penitent, or at any rate of a defendant, in any issue which touches either themselves or their work in relation to the world around them, particularly in their relations with women. Like other fashions of the hour, this inversion of a proper pride—distinguishable, as it can be, from a proper humility—would not be accepted uncritically. In anything that follows, then, will the reader please realize that I am considering a matter with calculated detachment, and mainly from the woman's point of view; but, without the smallest intention of surrendering to a fashion that has been carried too far?

Since an author, more than others, lives upon his nerves—is there not always something a little improbable in the sight of a *fat* author, though, without fat, how can the poor fellow have any reserves of physical warmth and food to replace the extra drain upon his expenditure of nervous energy?—since an author lives upon his nerves, and to that extent is probably a greater problem to himself than (in this great matter of self-control) are other selves to other people, it follows that he must be, probably, less easy to live with than folk less preoccupied with the critical observation of whatever pricks their brains and hearts. An author is not merely a mirror reflecting experience. He is a prism, analyzing, sifting and codifying everything that comes, even unconsciously, within the focus of his refractivity. This sounds alarming. Nevertheless, women seem to marry authors no less readily than they marry Philistines; and, though the story of the subsequent experience of both parties in this experiment has been recorded again and again, though it is always substantially the same story, neither the author-man nor the author-attracted woman approaches the other with any exceptional fears; rather, in fact, with a more than usual care-free confidence.



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Indeed, may we not say that, to women not repelled at the very start by this queer occupation, authors even seem to promise more (whatever their performance may prove) of interest, of variety, of sympathy, of understanding, and, consequently, of hazard than do other prospective husbands?

The "hazard", the risk, the twinge of suspense, perhaps of trepidation, is not the least important of these attractions. In the great words of Carlyle:* "They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are the *allurements* that act on the heart of man".

If this be true of men with a grain of heroism latent in their hearts, it is infinitely true of a woman at the moment when she is falling in love. The reason is not far to seek. Love provides the motive-power for heroism (which means self-sacrifice) through the endless acts of giving which are the life of Love, and every lover, therefore (just in so far as he or she is loving) is, potentially, a hero or a heroine. A lover is one who has enlisted under Love. Time will soon prove whether he or she can sustain the heroic part for which he or she has volunteered so light-heartedly. This is equally true of both sexes. None the less, the difference of emphasis which makes the difference of gender (for, as Coventry Patmore followed many great originals in reminding us, gender or sex is not a difference of substance but a difference of aspect in regard to the complete *homo*, which is agreed both by the mystics and by the men of science to be the Real Man)—none the less, this difference of emphasis or aspect in the woman-who-loves is important, and pregnant with consequences. Summarily put, the difference is this: a woman finds her center outside herself, in another, and first in the man that she loves, then in her husband's child. A man's center, though indeed beyond him, is discovered through himself: that is, in his proper work. In a sense parallel to (but different from) hers, he is his own instrument for its fulfilment. His need is never, in this respect, for another human being to "center" himself upon.

As John Milton wrote of Adam and Eve:

> He for God only, she for God in him.

but this famous line is still better in its context (*Paradise Lost*: Book IV. Lines 291-293):

> For contemplation he and valour form'd,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only: she for God in him.

This is an axiomatic truth: consequently, the more often it is disputed the more clearly its truth appears. Look around you!

When, therefore, a woman has enlisted under the banner of Love, has been captured by rather than has captured the honour of self-dedication, she has surrendered her whole self (which is her heart), whereas her lover, however sincere and deeply in love he may be, can give only that which he has to give: not his whole self (for it is proper to him, in the sense above defined, to be self-centered), but everything else—everything except that core of himself which is his work: "He for God only: she for God in him".

It is, moreover, just here that being an author magnifies the difference. Outside religion and the arts, men, though thus self-centered, work through other instruments beside their own selves: the soldier and the sailor and the Civil Servant through the Service to which they belong; the scholar the professor and the teacher through the University or College; the lawyer and the

* The Essay on Mahomet in *Heroes and Hero-worship*; eleventh paragraph from the end.

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doctor through the courts of law or the hospital, the clinic, the open consulting-room of private practice; the man of business through his office, his organization, or through a Trust; the banker and the stockbroker through the money-market; the churchman or the architect through the church or through the contractor; the tradesman through the wholesaler or the market; the big merchant through the whole machinery of the import, export, and transport industries; and so on. But, with artist and with author, it is otherwise. The artist and the author depend wholly upon themselves. Give to either of these two a pencil and a piece of paper, and he needs nothing else. With these two instruments only, eternal, unchanging, unimprovable from the days of the stylus and waxen tablet or papyrus until now, author and artist are provided generously. Their imagination accomplishes the rest. Indeed, of the twain, the author is the more free. The author's necessities are nothing external to him at all. He can compose in imagination and can trust to his memory. Poetry was composed long before writing had been invented. The bards before Homer composed in imagination. Poetry was recited or chanted for centuries before it could be either written or read.

This, however, is not all.

It is true that the author needs his imagination: to be visited by his Muse, as the Greeks put it. It is also true, alas! that the Muse cannot be summoned, immediately and at will:* That is the tremendous natural and technical handicap imposed upon all authors; but, after all, it is only fair that the almost infinite freedom, which is the prerogative of authorship in respect of its tools, should have its proportional counterweight of burden in an author's almost absolute dependence upon inspiration from a source superior to his little egoistic self. Almost, I say, for the Muse, like a woman, can be coaxed by skilful wooing.* Not by him, but through him, is his best work done. The flaws only are his very own. No more than the vessel or the well into which the spring of inspiration filters, his one point of honour is to be ready, watchful, clean so that the lady who lives at the bottom of the well, whose name is Truth, may find in him a vessel fit, and inviting, for her surprise-visits.

What does all this mean to the woman who falls in love with an author? Instead of leading, by the light of the biographical instances that will follow, to the inevitable answer, I will put it in front of them all. A woman who falls in love with an author has fallen in love with a man who is married already!

Think what this, the central fact in their situation, must involve for both of them, for it is the clue to all that follows. An author is married to his Muse, in other words to a divinity: to a minor divinity, no doubt; but what woman would welcome, into the heart of her husband, the rivalry of even another woman? How can she welcome (as in truth she instinctively does, in whatever mixture of love and terror) the rivalry of a goddess: a goddess of more than mortal, though of less than carnal, beauty? A woman never could do this but for one reason: namely, that a man who is desirable to a goddess must seem more desirable than other men to an otherwise whole-hearted woman capable of recognizing the attractions of divinity: in other words, to a woman capable, however obscurely, of recognizing the attractions peculiar to him, the man of her choice. Illumination certainly any man (or woman)

* *The Art of Thinking*, by the Abbé Ernest Dimnet, 929.

* *Op. cit.*

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must have to divine attraction in any human creature at all. This illumination is given by love: for the definition of Love is simple. The love of an object is our perception of its beauty. By the eyes of love, at any rate, to be seen is to be believed.

Her compensation is this: whatever the rival goddess may have, she has "less than carnal" qualities; love makes little things precious, humble ties great; and thus it is by the humility of the flesh itself, when glorified by love, that the woman knows that she can hold him. Whenever this knowledge dominates her, the fears of an unfaithful Imagination fly away. There abides only—then—the satisfaction of feeling that he has found favour in the eyes of a goddess, inconstant in her visits to him, from whom an affectionate woman-on-the-spot can never have much substantial to fear. Unfortunately, the ensuing experience never works out quite so simply as the intending wife, made wise by intuition of the special danger involved in marrying an author, supposes. It need never prove so dangerous as her worst moments of fear, never is so simple as her highest moments of glad confidence anticipate. This is the point, however, at which every such marriage-story begins.

(How do I write so confidently? How do I know? If it does, why does the quiet lucidity of all this tempt you to believe me? Because, for sixteen years, both in theory and in the observation of practice, the matter has never been long out of my mind. The books written during those years, all but *The Beardsley Period* of 1925, have been the working out of these simple and eternal *re*-discoveries: first, from Coventry Patmore,* the poet of married love, whose boast it was to have originated nothing, but only to have "dug again the wells which the Philistines have filled"; secondly, by biographical studies of the marriages of William Blake with Catherine Boucher, of Elizabeth Barrett with Robert Browning, and of Thomas Carlyle with Jane Welsh; thirdly, by keeping an eye, prepared by Patmore, open to the people around one, and to the virtually contemporary accounts of such marriages as have been published in the meantime. These are my credentials, these the sources—open to all. Do not, therefore, fear anything original. The utmost originality that I can compass is only Original Sin, and some American readers will share my own belief that, upon reflection, Original Sin is the only Democratic form possible to originality.)

Now to the evidence; now to the stories: they are all the same story except in circumstantial differences. So, at last, goodbye to theory! Let us test it where it is tested hardest, in the homes of men and women, of women who have felt the lure, and seen some of the danger, and yet—who have married authors.

> The truths of Love are like the sea
> For clearness and for mystery,

wrote Coventry Patmore: the opening couplet of the *Wedding Sermon* which concludes the poem, once so much admired in America, *The Angel in the House*; and, in England still, this conclusion is readily obtainable, by itself, for the equivalent of twelve cents. Both the clearness and the mystery are abundantly apparent in the following authentic histories of love and marriage.

Who can forget Mrs. Blake's single complaint against her husband, rightly repeated in every Life of him and of her: "that Mr Blake was so little with her, though in the body they were scarcely separated, for he was

* *The Idea of Coventry Patmore.* Oxford; 1921. See especially the loveliest and the last, of his prose: *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower* (1895). *Critical Essays:* Holt, 1925. *The Brownings* (1929); *The Two Carlyles* (1931): Houghton Mifflin.

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incessantly away in Paradise".* Her practical difficulty, consequently, was that there was so often no money in the house! At meal-time, on one desperate occasion, when he had forgotten all about it, and all about her and her empty larder, she brought him back from Paradise by placing an empty plate before him at table—but was it, really, not rather *back to* the sunniest spot in the whole Garden when a tact so compelling, and so beautiful, was used? We cannot always live upon the heights, but even on the heights there are valleys, and the home, if a *domus caritatis* of this quality, is *the* happy valley upon earth.

The nights of Blake were visited by visions, and he could not (he said) transfigure them to paper without Catherine's aid. Absent by day in his imagination, he absented her from sleep by night. Yet his contemporary friends agree that she would "willingly" rise and sit beside him, sometimes for "night after night"; for only so was he at peace and happy in his work. Her "willingness" does not sound credible, does it? That is where the value of this instance lies. Only love makes the incredible seem easy, or the easy seem hard; and our sense of incredulity (if we have it) at this story is very important: it is the measure of the lovelessness in ourselves. Yet they were happy, for (as the experiences of the two Carlyles inform us) "love somehow makes it bearable, in spite of everything". Catherine Blake was a lover and, in consequence, a heroine: her rewards, like her experiences, were heroically real and (by any commercial standard) small. At first Blake, the lover, terrified her; and—if we follow Mr. E. J. Ellis's interpretation of the matrimonially early poems *Broken Love* and *William Bond*—she seems to have recoiled from his embraces, whereupon he proposed to add a concubine to his household. At this she wept, and Blake abandoned his plan. That and the preceding tale of the empty platter should be enough to etch her hard experiences. Her reward, comparably heroic, was to hear Blake cry upon his death-bed, almost to a day the forty-fifth anniversary of his wedding: "Stay as you are! You have ever been an angel to me; *I will draw you*": which he did. Her comment was: "He died like a saint . . ."

How little that seems: her husband (whose pleasure it was to draw) was to reward Catherine's lifelong devotion and to prove his love for her by satisfying not hers but his own instinct! Could the super-selfishness of a great artist be better shown? How *could* she bear it? Only because all husbands are children to their wives, and to see the man-child happy with pencil and with paints is scarcely less satisfying to a mother's instinct than to see a baby made happy with a doll or with a rattle. "Scarcely", please observe, for alas! no husband can take the place of children, since only the physical child is wholly dependent upon her, and that total dependence upon her is the ultimate satisfaction of motherhood. Is not the latest baby always the dearest? Mrs. Blake, by marrying a great poet and an artist, had chosen the most heroic part that the army of lovers has to offer. Thus she had to choose between a super-heroism and a superlative failure, and Love (by denying her a child) had given to her the glory of its utmost self-sacrifice and danger. The post of danger is the post of honour. In a childless marriage, such as that of Mrs. Blake or of Mrs. Thomas Carlyle, a woman turned into a heroine by Love is chosen to surrender everything. Both succeeded, in parallel but divergent degrees of hazard, pain, and tears. They managed to

* *William Blake* (*English Men of Letters Series*): Macmillan, 1926.

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succeed by possessing superlative hearts. Did not Mrs. Carlyle write to her future husband that she needed no one to teach her "disinterestedness"? The constant factor necessary to victory each potentially had, and each finally acquired. This factor is a fathomless capacity for loving.

Turn next to the Brownings for a victory seemingly easy. Mrs. Browning's great act of faith seems to have been made in courtship, made when she decided, in an agony of physical and mental surrender, to fly with Robert from her father's house. There is no room, here, to revive the crucial details, which her love-letters and her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* reveal to us all. At the end of their long journey to the Mediterranean coast of France, an old friend of Elizabeth cried: "She is not so much improved, as transformed". What a moment this for Robert Browning! But was it all as easy as it seems? Without a breath of demur to either of this beautiful pair of poets, (and here for once, I think, that both to have been poets, though usually an additional difficulty, aided their union), we must remember that no record has survived. First, there could be no letters, since they were apart only once and for not more than one week. Second, when the stricken Browning became, after fifteen years of marriage, a widower, crying, too, throughout the first week of that separation, "I want her! I want her!"—till Miss Isa Blagden (a devoted friend and neighbour in Florence) had to persuade him to leave Casa Guidi, and to come, with his boy Penini, to her own villa at Bellosguardo—some years after his return—for he had decided to sever himself from that sacred past—to London, he destroyed a mass of family papers. The nature of their content it would be impertinent even to imagine; all that we need to know is that her wish and his wish was fulfilled: that, so far as we have the evidence, here was a pair of people with genius who did not make a muddle of their marriage. Possibly that Mrs. Browning was not only a wife but a mother also had much to do with this.

On the Carlyles we need not linger. It was unfortunately a childless marriage. When such is, also, a mixed marriage (for she spoke of his dreadful "Dumfries accent" and of the "inequality" of their births) there are, surely, sufficient complications! Still, complications and difficulties are the opportunities of life. When the wife desires a "genius" before all, is childless, and has herself the "artistic" (which is the opposite almost of the artist's) temperament, is not the price of Love's victory, for such substantially it was, bound to have been great?*

The union of Henri Gaudier and Sophie Brzeska, beautifully told by Mr. H. S. Ede in *Savage Messiah* has the special interest of an artist answering, primarily and constantly, to a maternal affection; of an elder woman selflessly devoted to a youth of genius. That which Madame de Warens was to Rousseau at Chambéry in the idle (if therefore tragic) category of adolescent "affairs", the elder woman, Sophie Brzeska, became to the son-like young sculptor, Henri Gaudier. There is space, here, only for the crucial comment: in a sentence from *The Two Carlyles*, of the two loves that engage a man, love for the mother and love for the mistress, the former is the more enduring; and that love alone survives every strain which inheres in the mistress-who-becomes-also-the-mother to the man—especially if he be the grown child who is the definition of poet and artist—of her choice. Henri Gaudier had a wonderful insight into the only two things that mattered to him: into life, the human materia

* See the final chapter of *The Two Carlyles* for the discoveries, and for the remorse, of a warm-hearted (and highly poetic) widower.

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for art, as plastic to imagination as the clay is to the sculptor's loving fingers; and into art, the "glory" of life, the beauty of which life it communicates and conveys by making it visible to the eye, palpable to the touch, audible to the ear. But how Sophie suffered! She, too, was one of Love's heroines. Read Mr. Ede and learn.

Less profound, but more amusing, were the chapters (I forget if they were collected later into a book) written by the wife of the late Arnold Bennett about her novelist husband. Speaking from memory, I found them a lively specimen of their kind: the kind that, without much depth, can tick off, prettily enough, the mannerisms, the little ways, the (more or less irritating) tricks of anyone alive enough to have them. These tricks are the stock jokes, and the classic irritations of every domestic existence. Still, an eye for profounder things may miss the superficies of a character; and comedy, of course, in any portrait has equal claims. Mrs. Arnold Bennett's observations, one felt, were meant to be conversationally, Gallicly amusing; the French touch; and only those who do not really know how deep the depths are dismiss (with suburban superiority) the lighter side Lar, the little god of the hearth, or the warmed slipper in the evening, or a man or a woman's impatience for the morning cup of tea. If life is sometimes trivial, should not literature sometimes be so? Others, of course, will say that such thumbnail, satiric little sketches should never be made at all; that the hearth, at any rate, should be sacred to its own original pair of worshippers. Well! since (whether or no) the satiric pencil cannot (of its very nature) keep quiet; since, too, the power of love to exasperate is the counterpart of its power to attract; since the sketches are made; since the superficies is paraded, what can we do? Surely, surely, not feel unduly ruffled, but rather put every such sketch to the honest literary test. Then envy, indignation, the mean amusement of Mr. Paul Pry will slip from us. Then, we shall be asking only this: "Since this is done, only one question concerns, alike, the subject and the reader: how well, how honestly, has it been done?"—for any trace of malice, spite, or pettiness will recoil upon the satirizer. None can sketch another person without a self-stripping of him- or of herself.

About the same time as the foregoing example, a good book appeared entitled *Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him*, by his widow. Under the heading: *Famous Authors by their Wives* I reviewed it. It was a book to keep. Here, again, we were privileged to see the mother-instinct uppermost, and Joseph Conrad came before us, delightfully, as a whole nursery of little selves: as it were, the creations of his brain, the whole brood of novels (written and unwritten) in the heart of him. What a happy, what a handful of a man, he was! and his wife seems to have found her other children less "numerous", less in need of her unobtrusive but incessant watchfulness, than he. She should have christened him Legion for, as he might have told her, using the while the royal We of a divine—and Muse-begotten—child: "*we* are many".

In America, as is natural because of its authorship, there has been discussion of a novel called *Half A Loaf* by Grace Hegger Lewis, now divorced from the novelist, Sinclair Lewis. As a novel I am ready enough to criticize it, but not in this place, not now. The reason is obvious. A novelist's intention must be as sacred to a critic as a biographer's intention must be. It would be the most stupid of injustices to discuss biographies and novels from the same critical angle: as stupid as to discuss soup and fish with the same

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spoon. You can convict, if you have the evidence, a biographer of falsehood: a novelist of bungling. You cannot discuss an allegation of fact in respect of a "novel" or a work of fiction, nor discuss, unless you are a born fool, the degree of "romantic interest" in a biography. Just because the silly section of the public imports its incurable muddle-headedness into such things, the first obligation of a critic is to separate them carefully. Readers of THE BOOKMAN, I am sure, are under no delusion in this matter, and how better can one show respect for intelligence than by being intelligent oneself? "Biography" may be the form in which "fiction" is preferred by noodles who understand neither. You and I, reader, not being thus disabled, can return contentedly to our subject.

Lately, there has appeared the lovely and pathetically ended story of Edward and of Helen Thomas; written by herself, in two small but exquisite books: *As It Was* and *World Without End*. The chequered story of this (with so much difficulty) developing poet, who was killed in 1915, told (as here it is) with that candour that can almost make reticence itself appear profane, is wonderful. It is too, of course, and in both senses, her story. Perhaps only another author can appreciate, to the full, one of its richest qualities: the possibility that this record—by the partner who was not expected to write—may survive and surpass the achievements in literature of the author-husband. If so, it will be not only through her inspiration and fidelity; it will be, also and more, because the ego that he never quite subdued was subdued by her through her selfless devotion to him.

A poet is the bride of his Muse, the child to his wife, the lover to his woman. Was he (we have to ask) when we are, as here, fortunate enough to be able to compare their several writings, as intelligently faithful to his Muse as his wife was to him? The question surprises you? But consider:

If a doubt remains, the inference will be simple. Just as true love must have not only the power to give, but also, and no less, the power to withhold, so a poet even, if he is to pluck the very soul from poetry, must on due occasion turn his back upon his Muse herself, must prove at some moment, as rare as it will be sacred to himself—when the Muse has entered him, has entered and is knocking insistently at every door of every nerve in the whole house of his enraptured being—at any extreme of poetic sacrifice must prove that he, too, is no slave; that he, too, has human interests;* that he, likewise, can be wooed in vain, and that the claims of his immortal mistress must, sometimes, be waived—waived when the wife, who is no goddess and the dearer for being but mortal, unintelligent here perhaps, and most certainly in need of him, creeps, or climbs, or thunders for some very humdrum service at his own (here) clumsy hands.

We have not, please also to remember, Edward Thomas's own version of this marriage; but we have his poems, and we have his essays and his hack-work. Indirect evidence, when not over-pressed, is extremely valuable in love, and in art, and in poetry. If—I say if—the work of Edward Thomas, who was born to be a writer, fails to be absolutely convincing, this may be because the degree of its shortcoming was meant to be revealing, meant to give to us an explanation that, possibly, the poet himself never thor-

* There are three worlds knowable to all of us: The world of Nature; the supernatural world of Man; and the superhuman world of Art. The last of these, being incomprehended by Philistines, is often called by them *in*human. We can sympathize with honest ignorance but it is well to be precise.

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oughly divined. The question to press on yourself is clear: Did he ever deny his Muse, or was he mistakenly content to chill her by his slavery?

Yet, how strait is the sacrifice demanded of a poet at this selected moment, the moment when he has, voluntarily and deliberately, to turn himself away from the divine visitant for whose coming his whole life is one sacrifice and one prayer, can be guessed from a passage in Giacomo Puccini's lately translated *Letters*. It is this:

> Without fever there is no creation. For emotional art is a kind of malady, an abnormal mental state, accompanied by over-excitation of every fibre and every atom of one's being.

A composer of grand opera could not be deceived about this! It is only the latest expression of a fact, of course, as eternal as the hills. The last sacrifice demanded, in the interests of art itself, of an artist is to descend, to come down to earth, to turn back from the heights at the humble cry from the valley of earthly love. The divine element in him, which married him to the Muse at his birth, must also, and in its own terrible turn, be given up. If he can do this, he, too, will have surrendered Everything: will have proved at any rate a capacity and a readiness not unworthy to be offered to the woman who has made, if she be a true lover, a similarly entire sacrifice of herself to him.

All the stories are the same story, not least in this: that they show, for we are speaking only of true lovers, the woman sacrificing everything to the man-poet, and the (more or less desperate) attempts by him, her author-husband, first to divine, then to recoil from, then (possibly) at last to accept, the final sacrifice without which he will never become, whatever height his art may reach, a *homo* in little: a being in whom all barriers between life and art, between the affections and the imagination, shall have been broken: and a man of imagination from whom the inhumanity (to others) of great art shall have withered away.

So intensely interesting is the spectacle of such a quest to a woman whose affections have fixed upon one destined for it, that the amount she can endure, as the rewards that she can receive, do not, do not to imaginative people, on reflection seem so very astounding: not incredible, with this clue. With it in our hands, and with the human examples by which and through which it alone can be deciphered and understood, we should be in a better position to answer our original question: Is it rash to marry an Author?

How would the reader answer, now?

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# WHERE YOUR BOOK-MONEY GOES

*by Maristan Chapman*

MANY persons, otherwise well informed, apparently imagine that the money they pay for a book goes directly and undivided into the author's pocket. When the manifest impossibility of this is pointed out to them, and mention is made of the cost of paper and printers' ink, they grudgingly admit that, of course, the publisher must have some of the profits, and add darkly: "No wonder they get rich!" Now a rich publisher is something the world has not yet seen, but every author is presumed to be wealthy. If one should die of starvation in an attic nowadays, it must be because there is something wrong with the writing and not with its wages. "For", says the layman, "I'm sure books cost enough."

Let us look into this. Out of the retail price, the retail merchant must get his profit of anywhere from 60 cents to 80 cents on a $2.00 book. The author's royalty uses up the rest of the first dollar. Out of the second dollar must come cost of paper, printing and art work, or the "making" of the book; the advertising necessary to make prospective readers aware of the book; the publisher's overhead charges, and so many other costs that very few cents of profit remain. The fact is that the publisher does not make any profit from the first printing of a book, and often he sustains a loss. The publisher's profit does not begin until the sale of additional printings, so many books are printed and sold without yielding a profit. This does not mean that the publisher is a philanthropist, but that the "weak" sellers are "carried" by more successful ventures. For publishing is the art of guessing. If a publisher guesses right a sufficient number of times, he remains in business; if he guesses wrong, he fails. But, however poor the sales of a particular book, the author receives his royalty for every sale made. Very well, then; he ought to be satisfied.

It is difficult for the reader to realize how few are the sales of any one book, even in prosperous times, when many books sell fairly well. He sees bookstores crowded with volumes and presumes that the commodity is moving steadily, yet he never thinks of distributing the royalties over the thousands of authors displayed. If he did he would rightly conclude that each might be doing very poorly as to income.

The income of an author is a modest affair, but press reports of a few best sellers have placed this income in the same category as the wages of Hollywood. Any suggestion that an economic depression can effect a writer of books is greeted with incredulity, and with an invitation to "look at *The Story of San Michele*", or some other high spot. Looking at other people's best sellers is not an invigorating sport, and rather adds to an author's depression. His nerves are continually jangled by the patent unbelief that appears in response to his assertion that he is not secretly hoarding his gains.

"Why," says the layman, "you had a book out last year, and you will have another in



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the spring, and you talk of being poor!" This perfectly true statement makes no allowance for the fact that last year's book fell flat and failed to make expenses, and that the new book will be unable to recoup the loss even though it prove a fairly good seller. And beyond the financial loss, the author is keenly aware that he has presented several months of creative work to nobody and for nothing. It is a humiliating retrospect, this consideration of a year of life irrevocably gone, and it takes all the hilarity out of the layman's final argument: "Anyway, you can't lose your job." Who in his senses wants such a job?

The phantom millions being disposed of, there remains for the author the irritating necessity of earning a living—"by one's pen", as the old phrase had it. How is this to be effected in these days when "nobody is buying books"?

Without going into minutiae, we will say that a successful novel nets its author $1000, a very successful one $2500. This is not a fabulous sum for a year's work. It is so unfabulous in fact, that if a particular year's book fails to "go over" the author is promptly plunged into debt, either with his publishers for advances on further books yet to be written, or through the usual commercial entanglements. It may take him several years to catch up after such a mishap, and if a general depression occurs about then he mortgages his house and his car, or sells both at a loss, and wonders what next to do to fend off the rent collector. If, on the other hand, the author commits a best seller and gets the astounding sum of $25,000 all at once—or even $50,000—he will very likely have to live on that for the rest of his natural life, so it behooves him to be careful. Actually, being human, he usually expands himself joyously and finds himself in difficulties long before that final date.

Even taking an author as superhumanly thrifty and a cautious business man—an amusing assumption in itself—it may help the layman to an appreciation of authorial finance to count on the fingers of one hand the number of best sellers he knows, and then pause to wonder what becomes of the remaining thousands of book-a-year novelists. For the above résumé is based on a steady book-a-year output, and makes no allowance for rest, for illness, for being "written out and stale", or for the many years when, for various reasons, the necessary book cannot be produced.

Another misunderstanding arises from a popular belief that an author's books are ordered and sold in car-load lots. The enterprising bookseller tells a customer that he has sold out Harold Penpush's latest book for the third time, but will have more in on Wednesday. The customer imagines that Mr. Penpush is idling on the Riviera, because the bookseller does not think it necessary to reveal that he cannily buys Mr. Penpush's novels three at a time. "Sold out", for some hidden reason, sounds like an entire first edition.

Still determined that the author shall not be hard up, the layman next suggests cheerily: "Why don't you write for the magazines? I've heard that the *Saturday Evening Post* pays ten cents a word". Why not, indeed!

Even though a short story may take more doing than a book, and is a far greater gamble in the selling—why not write for the magazines? The answer is that, in good times, the market is congested and competition razor-keen, and during a depression, when authors are tearing their fast-graying hair, the magazines are "not buying anything at present". The magazines are living on their hump, like camels in the desert. They are using material from their files which, while not quite good

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enough to meet competition in a boom period, is plenty good enough to keep the magazine afloat in a period of diminishing circulation. This sweeping statement does not apply to magazines dealing in timely, serious articles or stories of a literary quality, for their very life depends upon that quality and upon the freshness of the material; but magazines of this nature do not pay startling prices.

The author may cry that he must live, but a magazine that is already overstocked fails to see the necessity. The harassed editor considers just now that the disappearance of several thousand authors would be a national improvement.

From which it will be seen that the depression operates upon individual authors and editors as it does upon other human beings. It makes them short-tempered; and each, in an effort to keep himself economically extant, deals hard blows at the other. The editor has had his budget cut by the magazine owner, so he must act accordingly. The author, in consequence, gets a check half the usual size, with an intimation that he may take it or leave it. He takes it because he must. This is not the time to stand on principle. He takes the docked check because his children need shoes and the school fees are due.

So the depression revolves as in every other business. The public can't afford books, so small retail bookshops fail, so jobbers can't collect, so they in turn cannot meet the publishers' statements, so the publishers cannot pay the printer promptly, so the printer cuts his force and more workmen are thrown out of employment, so publishers have to donate a percentage of their profits to the Unemployment Fund, and authors, whose heads are only just above the troubled waters, must try to rescue their submerged brethren by dividing their royalties and docked pay-checks with the Fund for Destitute Authors.

Although an author may from time to time write for the magazines, a book-writer's main reliance must rest upon his book sales, if only for the reason that the two branches of writing are growing daily more distinct and specialized. After all, authorship is a profession and its pursuit is subject to the same laws as those which govern success in any profession—the laws of patience and steady work. Unless an author perpetrates a best seller now and then, he remains in the low brackets all his life; and the accomplishment of a best seller, when all is said, is not within the author's control. It is a fortunate accident, for no one can predict what sort of book the reading public will "take to" with the necessary abandon.

If there were a formula for a best seller, all the author would have to do would be to learn to write one. As it is, he must jog on his way, doing the best he can at the kind of book he does best, and explaining to his excited friends that having a "real book" published does not necessarily result in an enviable bank balance.

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# UPTON SINCLAIR ON CURRENT LITERATURE

A SUMMARY OF A CONVERSATION WITH

## *C. Hartley Grattan*

In spite of the fact that Upton Sinclair has published two books of "literary criticism", *Mammonart* and *Money Writes*, one rarely thinks of him in connection with the criticism of current books or even speculates upon his likes and dislikes among the writers now in active practice. To some extent this attitude is just, for Mr. Sinclair has never pretended to be a professional literary critic. He has been rather a creative artist and a pamphleteer. To those readers who dislike his work he is the latter exclusively. But to the world at large he takes his place as one of the great literary men of the day. His works are almost immediately translated into French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese and Russian, which is a testimony to his popularity, if not to his art. His books contribute to the forming of opinions about America in almost every country on the globe. In almost any of these countries his opinions about books would command respectful attention. They should have at least the tolerant attention of American readers.

It was with considerable curiosity, therefore, that I recently engaged Mr. Sinclair in an evening's conversation about current American books and writers. He insists that he is far from assessing a writer by his economic opinions, though he is always interested in them and finds that they often clearly explain the sort of books a writer produces. On the other hand he confessed to having a dislike for the modern experimentalists. In judging a piece of fiction he demands first and foremost that it tell a good story. A good story well told, the definition of William Lyon Phelps, would accurately define his conception of the novel. The experimentalists he regards as essentially idle people who in their idleness evolve elaborate and intricate ways of saying unimportant things to one another—or to themselves. Mr. Sinclair has lately read with great interest Max Eastman's *The Literary Mind*, and with especial approval the essay entitled *The Cult of Unintelligibility*. This is, to him, essentially a class phenomenon, which is to say that those writers who indulge themselves in this fashion have been uprooted from any nourishing literary soil. They have been cut off from rewarding themes by class taboos and prejudices. That they may have something to do, and so escape lethargy and boredom, they think up intricate ways of saying the nothings that currently engage their minds. If they really had something vitally important to say, they would not be concerned with "devices". When a writer is possessed by a theme, form takes care of itself. And so Mr. Sinclair disclaims all interest in the experimentalists, considering them darkeners of literary counsel, feverish products of a decadent social system.

A further reason for insisting upon a clearly told story as the basis of all valuable fiction is Mr. Sinclair's conviction that all truly great writers have also been popular writers.



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It is exceedingly unlikely that the masses of readers will find any interest in the febrile manipulative techniques of the experimentalists. Proletarian art will, therefore, find it necessary to stick pretty close to the traditional story form. The fact that such a writer as Boris Pilnyak, whose *The Volga Falls to the Caspian Sea* is burdened with technical devices, still shows traces of the fashion he condemns, Mr. Sinclair explains by reference to Russian literary history. He points out that when the revolution came Russian literature was largely in the hands of the sort of writers who have lately wielded so much power in Europe and America. The early Soviet writers were not able to escape this influence, but from his reading Mr. Sinclair is convinced that the straight story is coming to dominate the bulk of the Russian product today and will entirely triumph in the future.

As an example of the confusion wrought upon the work of a man of great talent, by susceptibility to the appeal of devices, Mr. Sinclair points to the work of John Dos Passos. He feels that Dos Passos has all the gifts of a great writer of fiction, even to that of being potentially able to engage a wide popular audience. But he is handicapped, almost to the point of being defeated altogether, by his insistence upon devices. He does not tell a straight-away story, but juggles three or four stories at once, dodging in and out among them in a very disconcerting way. Furthermore, he insists upon interrupting his narratives by The Camera Eye, Newsreel, and short biographies of notable figures of the period being described. It is Mr. Sinclair's firm conviction that this combination of vices quite obscures the powerful virtues in Dos Passos's work in a haze of unessentials, and until such time as he disabuses himself of his conviction that by introducing them into his work he is heightening the importance of his art, he will fail of the final realization of his talent.

As proof of the fact that these adventitious decorations are not necessary, Mr. Sinclair points to the work of Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis. He holds Dreiser in high esteem and considers *An American Tragedy* one of the great novels of the world. To be sure he makes the usual objection to Dreiser's clumsy style and to his penchant for overwriting. He insists that he could, without marring the book, cut out one-fourth of the material in *An American Tragedy*. Furthermore, he feels that the worth of the book could easily be improved by having almost any high-school teacher of English straighten out the sentences in what was left after the pruning. But even so, and in spite of the irritation with Dreiser's mannerisms, he places him among the great writers of the day, and points with delight to the fact that Dreiser does not feel any need for febrile devices. He is so possessed by his stories that the old-fashioned straight narrative technique quite suffices. The same is true of Sinclair Lewis. *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith* Mr. Sinclair finds to be superb novels, marvellous studies of contemporary American life.

As to the future of these two writers, Mr. Sinclair holds emphatic opinions. He is deeply impressed with Dreiser's courage in going to the Kentucky coal fields to see for himself how badly American men and women can be treated and raising his voice, loudly and emphatically, in denunciation of the group that is responsible for these conditions. He feels that if Dreiser carries this passion into fiction in the form of a great labor story, the result will be one of the greatest of American novels. He thinks that Dreiser is eminently capable of making the necessary sacrifices of time actually to see and master the materials that must go into such a book

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and of accepting with fortitude any temporary possible unpopularity that may result from such a venture. Lewis, on the other hand, he views with scepticism and chagrin. He points to the fact that Lewis has let it be known on several occasions that he is going to write a labour novel, but he has never brought one out. Mr. Sinclair fears that Lewis has become so entangled in the alleged good things of life that he is incapable of spending the time and energy necessary to gain mastery of the materials. Consequently, it seems likely to Mr. Sinclair that we have had the best of Sinclair Lewis already and that what will come in the future will be companion pieces to *Dodsworth*, which he regards as a trivial bit of work, but symptomatic of Lewis's decay. Lewis's evolution he described as the typical experience of a successful writer under capitalism. Such a writer is able to 'get" so much more than he can "earn" (like all who profit in a large way from the system), that his morale is destroyed by distracting luxury and he foregoes the effort to master significant material which naturally does not come under his eyes in his daily living.

Of the novelists of the middle generation who came up for discussion, Mr. Sinclair only expressed violent distaste for one, James Branch Cabell. Admitting Cabell's superlative gifts, he branded the total effect of his work as "poisonous" and called *Jurgen* a foul" book. It seems to him that Cabell's writing—or rather point of view—is the product of some profound personal maladjustment.

Though he does not claim to be in any sense an explorer of the contemporary literary scene, and certainly not a professional seeker for new talents, Mr. Sinclair still attempts to read every new novel reviewers or friends said him to think will be rewarding. Like most close observers of the current American literature he is impressed by the number of excellently written novels published every season. He laments the great number that sink in the sea of publications. And he cites with pleasure the considerable number of fine autobiographical novels that are finding a place on his shelves. To be sure he wishes that more writers could proceed beyond the first autobiographical effort, but he recognizes that ability to tell one's own story well and ability to create characters are two different things. Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* he found to be full of excellent stuff, full-bodied, vigorous and a wonderful portent of future fine work. But he feels that it was over-written and burdened by unnecessary utilization of devices that contributed nothing to the worth of the book. He found it wisest to savour the book rapidly, judiciously skipping the seemingly padded portions. Of Evelyn Scott's work, he held a heterodox opinion, confining his admiration to *Escapade*. *The Wave* he found unreadable since it lacked a thread of story to hold his interest. The peculiar "mosaic" technique Miss Scott has developed seems to him a mistake. He has found nothing by Ernest Hemingway readable. If it be true that Hemingway's literature is a product of his experiences in the war, then Mr. Sinclair prefers not to utter a condemnation of Hemingway, for he recognizes that the war was a terrible experience from which he did not suffer at first hand. But Hemingway's book still remains profitless to him. He has, by way of contrast, great hopes for Michael Gold, regarding *Jews Without Money* as an excellent job. He laments Gold's present course of doing so much non-fictional writing, a task better left to someone without his talent for fiction.

Among the host of novels issued Mr. Sinclair was reluctant to select any for invidious distinction. But he was persuaded to mention

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a few that he regarded as especially impressive. He mentioned, with high approval, Idwal Jones's *Steel Chips*, Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth*, Edith Kelley's *Weeds*, *Green Bondage* by Frances Ogilvie, T. S. Stribling's *Teeftallow*, Dell Munger's *The Wind Before the Dawn* (this last is about fifteen years old) and *It's Not Done* by William C. Bullitt. In passing he lamented the fact that his close friends, Floyd Dell and Fulton Oursler, found it impossible to devote themselves to the writing of really serious fiction. The early Dell books he holds in high esteem and he cited the first half of Oursler's *Behold This Dreamer* as delightful.

Mr. Sinclair confessed that he read very little literary criticism and that he found himself unable to mention many critics in whose judgment he reposed any considerable confidence. He said he had high respect for the judgment of Edmund Wilson, though he remarked with a smile that perhaps his opinion was biased by Wilson's turning to radicalism. Robert Morss Lovett's judgment of books he considered excellent. He found Henry Hazlitt's work in *The Nation* well worth reading. But most of the New York reviewers he considered dilettante in their attitude, entirely unreliable as guides to what he would care to read. As an example of the sort of critic he distrusted he selected Clifton P. Fadiman, whom he described as a clever reviewer of fiction, but so addicted to "poison" that if the "poison" was not present, he dismissed the piece of fiction as unimportant. But in Mr. Fadiman's favour, he immediately recalled that he had on occasion seen fleeting hints of social passion in his reviews and lately had been pleased to observe his name among the protestants in extra-literary affairs. On the whole, Mr. Sinclair seemed to regard criticism even more than fiction the victim of class prejudices and so enervated beyond repair short of a shaking-up occasioned by a social revolution.

He recalled his early acquaintance with Paul Elmer More, in the days of More's association with *The Independent*. More, he observed, was a forceful writer because he had taken the trouble to develop a serious point of view to which he resolutely stuck. Not that Mr. Sinclair admired the point of view, but he feels that a passionate sense of conviction is absolutely necessary to forceful and revealing criticism. Dilettantism is death. As an example of More's resolute sticking to his guns, he recalled that just after *The Jungle* had been published, he met More in the subway. More congratulated him on his success and Mr. Sinclair offered to send him a copy of the book if he had not seen it. More gravely declined the offer, remarking that he had "given up" realism. But Mr. Sinclair still hopes that he will become important enough to draw a denunciation from Mr. More.

Without a trace of malice, Mr. Sinclair rejoiced in the seeming decline of the influence of H. L. Mencken. He deplored the fact that Mencken had been able to teach a whole generation of brilliant young writers how to scoff and sneer and treat civilization like a football to be booted around for the fun of it. It seems to him fortunate that the depression has come along to depress these bright young fellows psychologically and make them susceptible to a more serious point of view. For above all else, Mr. Sinclair is serious. In fact he is in dead earnest. "The conversation" he writes in *The Wet Parade*, "may sound naïve to sophisticated moderns, but then neither Maggie May nor her mother had ever heard of a 'modern'. They took life seriously and were entirely unashamed of doing so." What Mr. Sinclair looks for in writers is the quality of unashamed seriousness, for he feels that life is a serious matter.

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# "MICHAEL FIELD" AND ROBERT BROWNING

PART TWO—WORKS AND DAYS

## *Edited by T. Sturge Moore*

NOTE: *Last month Mr. Moore's quotations from the letters and journals of the two women who signed themselves "Michael Field" told of the beginning of their acquaintance with Robert Browning, and the growth of warm friendship and mutual literary admiration. These further quotations from their journals and other private papers cover the last year of Browning's life, and the aftermath of "Michael Field's" loving devotion to his memory.*—THE EDITOR.

* * *

*(May 9, 1888. Related by Katherine Bradley.)*

WE FOUND the drawing-room at Palace Gate full of flowers.* Under one of Pen's statues, in a pale blue roc's egg, were our carnations. Mr. Browning came in greeting us as his "two dear Greek women". He opened ὦ τεκνον with] a feint of kisses. Ardently then and afterwards, he spoke of the Sapphics, expressing interest in Tiresias, which he himself had once thought of treating. When I remarked that I wished he had treated it, he said, "No: it ought to be treated by a woman". He said to Edith that he liked the second series of poems even better than the first, and prophesied that they would make their mark. But he refuses to write a preface. We must remember we are Michael Field. Again he said, "Wait fifty years".

* Browning's birthday was on May 7th.

*(There are entries on July 4, 1888, by both Edith Cooper and Katherine Bradley. They have been mingled to give a consecutive narrative; where necessary the writer of a particular phrase or paragraph is indicated.)*

It was on Monday after a midsummer of cold, heat and thunder, rain and blight—we asked to go to Palace Gardens. Ah, but we were happy! Deep mowing grass of happiness was ours. Three poets together—conventionality and ceremony put away—we shaped life divinely—and talked of poets, past, present, and to come. It is wonderful to watch the "Old's" serene, pondering, almost awed gaze at P.* The young face responds frankly, the trembling hands hid from sight and no colour on the quiet face, while I glow and thrill like a sunset.

Miss Browning made a long crowing noise of joy and astonishment when we entered—fresh from the pouring rain. He, too, when he came in, did not know whether to thank us or not. At lunch we talked of *Whoever Wakes in the City*, and they both seemed pleased with my genuine appreciation of the poem. After talk of Ruskin, "a very attaching man", Matthew Arnold, et cetera, the "Old" grew meditative an instant and then said, "What would the world be without such people as Matthew Arnold, Ruskin and Michael Field?" I said he must not put Michael's name with such names as these.

* P=Puss=Edith.



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But he stoutly maintained that he had been disinterested in the discovery as in the case of Matthew Arnold. His limitless belief in us is appalling. What indeed is so appalling as the "Be ye, therefore, perfect" of love!

There was wonderful, passionate praise of the Chartreuse and its precious liqueur, which Edith tasted—a golden drink full of the piercing flavours of many good creatures of God. Our talk was much of Musset; all his [Browning's] life he had regretted not being present at his discourse at the Academy. His wife went; he had an engagement and did not give it up. "Such a man! It would have been worth while to see him, even for three moments." Matthew Arnold had told him that at sixty-two he hoped to give up the inspectorship and devote himself to poetry. Devote himself to poetry at sixty-two—it seemed a strange notion "when one thinks of the flowery, bowery, bewigged sort of person a poet is usually conceived to be". Our good host covered our plates with strawberries, telling us at the same time of the Italian imprecation, "May he want sugar to his strawberry". After lunch he drew us both down beside him on the sofa in the drawing-room, and would not let us go, even when the kind Miss Browning dropped a lot of books from the book-shelves where she was searching for some French volumes for us. He held us tight and by and by read us some of the loveliest little poems of Musset, very quietly, with a low voice, full of *recueillement* and now and then a brief smile at some touch of exquisite playfulness. When he heard we were writing prose, he said, "take care you do not derogate". I asked what models should be taken for prose comedy. He was not much for models. "Prick it out yourself. Trust yourself." He promised me (Edith) to play the next time we meet him some of Galuppi's *Toccatas*. Think of hearing them played by the poet who has opened to us all their reserves of pity, of dreariness, their notes of far-off festivity and regret. At last he was forced to go; he hoped we should come again, "under happier auspices". We could not be so happy when he had gone. We stayed and talked with Sarianna about Pen and his father.

*(Edith writes.)* He is always the poet with us; it seems impossible that he goes behind a shell of worldly behaviour and commonplace talk when he faces society, yet so it is. In his own room, in his study, he is Rabbi Ben Ezra, with his inspired, calm, triumphant old age. His eyes rest on one with their strange, passive vision, traversed sometimes by an autumnal geniality, mellow and apart, which is beautiful to meet. Yet his motions, his touch, are full of impetuosity and warmth and contrast with his steady outlook and his "grave, kindly aspect".

*(March 6, 1889. Related by Katherine Bradley.)*

I went to see my vivid old damask rose Miss Swanwick. We spoke of *Long Ago* and the old gentleman. She told me how, once at dinner, he had said to her, "I wish you could have known her. . . . It was something for fifteen years to have the society of such a woman, and I valued it; for while we were at Florence, I never left her for an evening". He spoke to Miss Swanwick of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. "It seems to me that if I had written such sonnets they would have burnt a hole in my desk", she said. But the poets had been wedded two years, before Elizabeth Barrett placed them in her husband's hands. Then, had he consulted his own feelings, he would have kept them sacred from the light, but he remembered he was the guardian of his wife's genius—an

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bade her publish them. Choosing this sublime old maid, for this deep confidence of his nuptial life, is a sign of the old gentleman's fine faculty for selection—the fool, or the insensitive person never looks where he is talking. On Tuesday, February 12th, we went to De Vere Gardens to lunch. The poet was dissatisfied with his own moods and the psychic entertainment he could give us. But he was infinitely sympathetic over *Long Ago*. He spoke to me of the tragic largeness of the lyrics. As he took us down to lunch, he stopped us before Pen's Dryope and said it had been worthily sung, referring to Edith's "There is laughter soft and free". We showed him the archaic head of Sappho.* Miss Browning could not forgive the smirk; but the old gentleman looked at it with thoughtful consideration. "If I were an artist, I should like to paint what the artist strove to express but could not. For instance, the firm round chin shows that this is a young face and the smirk is an attempt to reproduce a sweet smile and the great eyes show that he was struck by the beauty and size of Sappho's eyes—that he felt them beautiful. . . ." He also said of the third batch of Sapphics, that they seemed much better to him than the others—there was certainly no falling off.

*(Related by Katherine Bradley.)*

Yesterday, Friday, April 26, 1889, we had our first informal, friendly lunch at De Vere Gardens. The April sunshine was continuous and splendid. Mr. Browning took up the seated Sappho† and began to read the fine Greek MS. After lunch, a Miss Heaton called; though extremely quiet, she had the faculty of rekindling old images and pictures. Once Mr. Browning had been, for one week, in the same house as the Duchess of Cambridge, who, wishing to be gracious to him, asked "How is Mrs. Browning?" "That was years after I had lost her." Such a story as this justifies Matthew Arnold's description of the British aristocracy as barbarians. Anent public speaking and dinners, he referred to the occasion when Talfourd's *Ion* was issued. Landor and Wordsworth were present and the health of the youngest poet present was drunk—that youngest being Robert Browning, then twenty-two. It was evidently much to him, to have these great poets drinking his health. He will never respond for literature; but once at the Temple, unexpectedly, allusion was made to him which demanded response and he contrived to make an adequately pretty speech, I fancy. He alluded to Spenser's: "Where whylome went the templar knights to byde Till they decayed through pride"; to Shakespeare's red and white rose scene in the gardens, (Henry IV, act ii, scene iv); to Charles Lamb's old benchers in the Temple.

After the caller had gone, I sat on a low stool and told him the plot of *Carloman*. (His eyes looked like Corot's pools in their gravity and stillness.) He listened gravely, feeling and realizing the problem. He said he would read some lines an admirer had sent him to judge—we should judge them—the letter was of the usual kind, written in grief after bereavement. In his youth, Mr. Browning had belonged to a glee club under the management of the parish clerk. They sung a poem of Tom Moore's in which occurred the line, "And flowers . . . gathered in Heaven". To save the morality of the piece, for the flowers were to garland a lady's brow, the old clerk substituted, ". . . gathered in a wood". Browning mournfully re-

* Reproduced on the cover of *Long Ago*.

† The frontispiece to *Long Ago*. A reproduction of the figure on the well-known vase at Athens.

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marked, that we must say the admirer's verses were gathered in a wood. Then we spoke of joy, not grief, being the heart of literature. He told us that once he had heard a barrel-organ playing a tune, that went exactly to a chorus of Aristophanes's—chorus in *Plutus* (Cario and the chorus bring up the rear, in antic dance), of which he gave us the delicious, balmy lilt. Then as we were twisting up the branches of the seven-branched candlestick (the stair-case) to the bedroom, we heard his soft touch at the piano. But he would not be persuaded to play to us on our return. This was a blessed day—he was genially contemplative of the past—and beholding it, seemed to find it very good. We were glad of the visitor, she led to talk undisturbed. We have so much to tell him there is clash and convulsion. I felt when he talked to Miss Heaton that he is used to serenely dominating the society he enters. He will not engage himself to go again to Venice; he has been nine times, and appears to cling to his wide, rich palace rooms at home.

*(May 9, 1889. Katherine Bradley tells of a visit to the Private View of the Academy.)*

On Friday morning, Edith and I started for Kensington, for my new dress of blond fawn, and a little before noon we were in the Academy. . . . In the afternoon, in a dense crowd, I caught sight of him. He turned quickly and we hastened together. He introduced the fair Venetian, his daughter-in-law. Later we encountered, just as (Fairfax?) Murray was drawing my attention to a beautiful, nude figure of a girl with a lyre, which he called an Egyptian Sappho. He dragged me by the arm, and stood gazing at it, with and by me, full of many thoughts. Then he turned with me, to a bronze by a friend of his; "careful, but not such beautiful work as the other". He looked across at P.* (His glance is a travelling and a passage.) When we parted, we recognized that he was proud to manifest to the world, that we were his friends, and we believed in him, in the deep scriptural sense.

*(July 12, 1889. Mrs. Cooper was dying. Katherine Bradley tells of seeing the Brownings.)*

I shall never forget the silent grace of our friends' welcome. No crowing chant from Sarianna and the old gentleman behind, so silent that I hardly knew he was in the room—their hearts were as muted bells, full of soft rejoicing, quieted by perfect sympathy. Afterward, when with tender impatience, Mr. Browning said we had enough of that—with reference to the details of illness at home—he enquired about the book,† and a fine conversation began. . . . He would certainly have the book. "Ah, Mr. Browning you will not care so much for the song book—it is not Greek." "Try me", was the emphatic response. I began to talk of Mrs. Carlyle. "No, you would not have liked her much. Though I know of no one who could have been more safely trusted with her. She would have tried to pick holes in you. . . . She had a fine forehead, black eyes, deep brown complexion", (not a happy nose, from the old gentleman's description) "and black hair". Miss Browning told indignantly how a Keats had been lent to her, and she had found it the work of one who had over-eaten himself with cake. . . . When Edith told how I had a friend, who I knew spoke ill of me, yet whom I continued to like, the Poet said, "I do not care what people say of me, but I do not like them to speak against those I love". His bearing was majestic and ani-

* Edith.

† *Sight and Song*, published in 1892.

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mated, the occasion of wonder in me. Even then, though I did not know it, he was awaiting the *Athenæum*, containing words of his to Fitzgerald*, so appalling that after we had read them, our spirits lay as dead at his feet, for three days. It was as if we had been playing fearlessly about the thunder-guarded throne, and had discovered that therefrom a fiery shaft had been that instant sped. . . . It is precious to the world, that there should be such passion in it, such undeviating, remorseless wrath. What championship! It was as if Fitzgerald had exposed and profaned his dead. One hears the groan with which he covers away such sorrow ere he falls on the injurer with Swift's masterly stroke. Suddenly, from being shut away in our dull bit of Surrey, we felt ourselves removed to the white central point of London life—to the mid-edge of intensest passion there.

*(January 16, 1890. A conversation with William Sharpe.)*

. . . Talk came up on the close confidential relations between Browning and his sister. He so feared the turbulence of his own nature that all his correspondence passed through her hands, as a safeguard against such expression as might stir up newspaper warfare. When he wrote the unfortunate lines on Fitzgerald he sent them secretly to the post by his servant, and Sarianna had the triumph of convincing him that her supervision was wiser than his impulse. They live, said Sharpe, in comradeship.

*(August 2, 1889. Written by Edith Cooper.)*

We arrived at De Vere Gardens, at about three o'clock; he was out, his slippers announced it to anxious Sarianna. She was indefatigable in talking time down. . . . We saw a photograph from Watts's head of him, not conceivably like. Also one taken by Groves, his old man-servant, once a little ploughboy, who rang the even bell for (Canon) Knox Little, two years, not forgetting it in work or play. While in service he got artistic hints from Pen, and the impulse to become a photographer from Smiles's *Self Help*. Tea came at four-thirty and the Botticelli table had our two disconsolate cups on it. Then he came—haste about his white hairs; Mrs. Orr had promised to drive him home, there had been a delay. His love sped to us through movement and words. We told him his picture had been with us. When he heard that mother would like to see it, although destined for another, he gave it to Sim zealously. "There, you shall have it." Sarianna also gave up her photo. "Go, write your name properly as I have done", said her brother. It is a good likeness but the cap is an ugly erection of flowers. "She is not wearing anything like this pretty cap," he said, and touched the nice gray thing, with its peach and gray ribbons. When Sim said she was pleased he liked it, he answered it was well the compliment had been to the right person. He had just whispered, "*Qu'elle est belle*", to Mrs. Orr in comment on the maid at a friend's house. Mrs. Orr stayed behind him a minute, to please mistress and

* TO EDWARD FITZGERALD

I chanced upon a new book yesterday;
I opened it, and, where my finger lay
'Twixt page and uncut page, these words I read—
Some six or seven at the most—and learned thereby
That you, Fitzgerald, whom by ear and eye
She never knew, "thanked God my wife was dead".

Ay, dead! and were yourself alive, good Fitz,
How to return you thanks would task my wits.
Kicking you seems the common lot of curs—
While more appropriate greeting lends you grace:
Surely to spit there glorifies your face—
Spitting from lips once sanctified by hers.

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daughter with a poet's comment on one of them, and was dumbfounded to learn her mistake, when she joined him with the question, "Which was it?" This he told with amused eyes and a little shake of his beard. He was wroth—yes faith, heartily—at the ill-natured review in the *Spectator*.* He hoped it was not that which kept us from issuing a new edition. He was concerned and fearful lest we had suffered. I assured him, *No*—I was nearly slain by a review in the *Athenæum* when I was but a child; after that I had never been hurt by any judgment; it had killed such sense of pain entirely. He told us of his own youthful disappointments. *Pauline* had been reviewed generously by Alan Cunninghame in the *Athenæum*; when *Paracelsus* came out, the young author was sure to notice, and only had two lines in *Recent Verse*! Browning evidently dislikes unsigned articles and the fluctuating criticism on an author's successive works. What respect he feels for the *Spectator* ("well known for its puritanism") is due to the unanimity of its appraisements from the influence of one mind. This brings it nearer to the ideal of continuous criticism and responsible signature. One year one man, the next another, reviews an author's books—hence the perplexing contradictions of their fate. *Long Ago* was no longer on the table, it had been lent to Mendelssohn's grandson, a poet, restive, "foolishly", under the classical tuition at Balliol. Browning wrote to him, to charm him into willingness to work for knowledge honours, while he had the precious opportunity. The young man called, and *Long Ago* was lent to him, to teach him the uses of Greek learning. "Sarianna was not gracious and did not want to let it go." Indeed, the dear soul was bleating after it. When we spoke of returning some books, her brother exclaimed derisively, "Are you afraid of Sarianna?" He assured us solemnly that he had never been able to say that he could have done better [work] if he had had the opportunity—throughout life he had been blessed with good conditions for work. As we passed Dryope, he said his daughter thought χέλυγ * the most beautiful poem in the book. "Yes," said Sarianna, "the simple creature had *Long Ago* for the sake of those lines." Our friends have no idea where they will spend their holidays—he is hard to stir. "I should like to take you two to Venice, and show its beauties to you—that would be an inducement." Pen and his wife love hospitality. "I am not like that!" mused the old poet. "I am not hospitable in their sense. I don't mind dining with thirty or forty people every evening, and it's done with. But I do not like to bring them into my inner circle. I like a few people immensely and want to have them with me." So much for the outside of our converse, "the rest is silence". Oh! Hamlet, love is holier than death and as unalterable.

N. B. The "Old" likes caraway cake.

*(From Katherine Bradley's journal.)*

It was delightful to learn that Hindoos care greatly for his poems, and that great numbers of Hindoo examinations in English are set from them. His new book is to be called, "A New Series of Jocoseria".† It is all ready, only a manuscript to be made. "But I am more interested now in what other people do, than in what I do myself", said our old friend sadly. We shall never ask him to play again; the music is still in his head, but the hands no longer execute—"Perhaps when some good day comes that will never come". We cannot bear to think that age

* Of *Long Ago*.

* In *Long Ago*.

† Eventually *Asolando*.

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has stiffened the hands. But he will go on writing, he hopes, till the end; to cease would be to him true death. I told how we never wrote a song, without thinking how he would react to it. And how we hoped to have finished a bookful before he returned. And he sighed piercing sighs, full of warm new grief—not youth's sighs—age and death so close—and parts of life still so sweet. And he begged us to come again soon. He did not like saying good-bye. Even on our way to "Mrs. Muggins's [?]" he would like us to come in and have bread and cheese with him! . . . When I said we should not go home that night, he said, "Worse things might happen than that he should have us to stay with him".

He spoke of the sons of great men; he had met the sons of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Shelley and Burns—the latter at Carlyle's. He was rewarded after he had left the room (he had sung one of his father's songs) by, "Can this be the son of Burns?" Many of Burns's letters cannot be printed. One was brought to Carlyle, apparently in Mr. Browning's presence; Carlyle shook his head and said: "Oh, no! This must never be published".

Oh! De Vere Gardens—our New Place, Stratford!

*(Mrs. Cooper had died on August 19, 1889. On December 12, 1889, Edith Cooper tells of hearing of the poet's illness.)*

Llannie has just sent us the news of our poet's illness. Sim has gone through the dark, with letters and a telegram. Is this year going to bereave us again—yet again, O God? I should have more hope, save for our last meeting; he was so gentle—as autumn is before dropping; presageful, penetrative gentleness, which has somewhat of remembrance, in the manner and the look. He said of our song book, "Try me". Shall we never hear the caressing voice give judgment and praise? It will half kill our poetry and make all the deep parts of our love memorial, which means that the value of life strikes the ground and is over (at least as the young estimate it). His kiss comes to my lips again, as I think of him—that seal of his comprehension of one's womanhood—flawless in stamp, tender with knowledge, warm as all action is that is divine and reverent. Perhaps he will die and never think of us. He "dared to hope" last spring that we loved him. As I hoped to have my mother's smile before she fell asleep—I hope he will think of us. I have always loved him with deep communion of spirit—Isaiah's "way of holiness", seemed to span the air that divided us and we walked thereon without speech, without fear. *Prospice!* He is no longer "nearing the place"—he is there. It make me stiff till I think of the beyond, and her breast, that "soul of his soul".* She was a woman, a poet. His coming will be all gain to her—To him! —can I wish that he should die, as I did for my Darling's blessedness? Perhaps there is a remote strength in me that could say yes—but it is very far away among the hills. He is so great, I am tearless as I write of him—the moment I slip back into myself, the tears burn. He wrote for us: ". . . I have heard a team of swans, so deathward chanting breast the stream". I wonder if his last hours will be harmonic, if they will have glory and impulse.

How strange, in spite of weeping I feel cold. Sim returns. The *Telegraph*, in a review of *Asolando* says that, by the most recent reports, he is recovering. The new poems are dedicated to Mrs. Arthur Bronson —the rest is silence once again. Ah, I remember, she is his old friend of Asolo.

* See Browning's poem *Prospice*.

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"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death: jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned."*

He has written of a kiss: "Goodnight, God bless you, Good-bye!"

*(December 13, 1889. Related by Edith Cooper.)*

We went, with the dark rain in our faces, to the reading-room, just after nine. As I left the house, I recalled the drear, lightless morning of our Darling's death and felt strange and braced. At first we could find no news. Sim went to the *Times*. She said in a slow whisper, "It is all over". I read; my breath was quick with pain and tears. . . . Our telegrams would reach Venice this morning. No words could contain the shadow of my love for him—they could bring me to his thoughts, that is all—yes, all, love cries with intolerable hunger. I hope he thought of us, but such hope is a vital kind of despair. His death was a perfect thought of God's. How I wish that I had been less proud when away from him and trusted more in his friendship. But my love was so great, it fortified itself with walls, against weakness or mere familiarity. When I was with him, all my nature issued and was free to his touch and his eyes. Reserve with me must be utterly broken when I love indeed and am close to the beloved one.

*(Katherine Bradley to Mr. Grey.)*

. . . He is gone ever green to God—full of courage and energy—to that great world of thought and love. We could not have willed for him a more perfect death—dying on that Thursday, for which you were waiting so breathlessly—able to receive the welcome given to his new book. And passing at the close of its birthday, to the resumption of all that is vital in our past that we call Heaven.

*(December 30, 1889. Written by Katherine Bradley.)*

. . . I have been praying. What he has done, what gives him Westminster Abbey—in so far as it is given him by the English people—is this: he has given them access to the spiritual world, quite apart from Revelation—he has shown them the deep things of Revelation as in *Karshish*, but he has found new pathways to God. . . .

*(January 2, 1890. Edith Cooper tells of being at Miss Swanwick's.)*

Here are some of her (Miss Swanwick's) memories of the "Old". She once saw him angry to fierceness, when he told how he and his wife had promised that they would communicate each with each after her death, if it were possible—and yet a medium dared say she spoke to *him*. It was a sacrilege against love. Miss Swanwick asked his opinion of Walt Whitman. He thought Walt dangerous; although he always did all in his power to help young writers (surely he confounded the age of the author, with the late publishing of *Leaves of Grass*), he could not recommend him. He seemed shocked at Mrs. Gilchrist's expression, that he was carrying on Christ's work. Strange, this judgment! "The virile Robert Browning, could not give recognition to the frank American—the Comrade!" I should never have thought it possible to shock the "Old". Tennyson said of

* The Song of Songs. Chap. viii; verse 6-7.

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Walt, that he had not the first requisite of a poet, he could not sing.

*(January 4, 1890. Arthur Symons writes.)*

You have of course, seen the birthday letter of Browning to Tennyson, which has recently been published. . . . Theodore Watts told me how he had just been visiting Tennyson, and how Tennyson had shown him the letter, and how he had said, stroking it tenderly with his hand, "How kind, how good of such a great man to write to me like that". I, on my part, remember well in what a deeply moved tone Browning spoke to me, four days before leaving England for the last time, of a birthday letter he had had from Tennyson, "It is too sacred to show to anyone—it was inexpressibly kind—no one would believe what a letter I have had from Tennyson".

*(May 14, 1890. Edith Cooper tells of a visit to Miss Heaton.)*

So much talk of the "Old", and how he longed to take Miss Barrett to Italy, reflecting he could only do so by marrying her. . . . He was slow in taking to society after her death, but the inevitable magnetism of the world of men drew him at last to his right place within it. Miss Heaton spoke of the "elastic ring" of Mr. Browning's wonderful voice. When Mrs. Browning saw Talfourd's portrait of herself (done for Miss Heaton) she exclaimed, "How beautiful!"; expressing thereby merely a contrast with all others, which were libels. The first time Miss Heaton saw Miss Barrett, talk fell on contemporary poets, and Miss Barrett spoke with reticent warmth of Robert Browning's poems. She kept him waiting a year, before she could bring herself to overcome her fears as to her health.

*(Extract from a letter written by Hiss Heaton to Katherine Bradley about Mrs. Browning. July 26. No year mentioned.)*

. . . It was said of her, that she had the intellect of an angel and the heart of a child. "The little name" was—Ba—(a, long). Mr. Browning usually calls her, I think, "my wife". If Miss Browning speaks of her to me, it often is as "dear Ba". It sounds as natural as possible; it recalls the time when many—most of whom have left us—called her by that name.

*(Miss Browning kept up a correspondence with Michael Field after the poet's death; and the following extracts may be of interest. The first is from an undated letter.)*

. . . Which did he prefer of the *Asolando* poems? I can hardly say—only I know, that on the very last Sunday he was up, before the last, Fannie* and I were alone (she had been unwell and was lying down), he came into the bedroom and had afternoon tea with us, and Fannie asked him to read to her—she wanted something from the new volume just coming out, she said. He fetched the proof-sheets and read *Rephan*, the *Reverie*, and finally the *Epilogue*—half ashamed that the last might seem boastful; as he read it, a cold feeling crept over me, though I said nothing, that those lines might be a real farewell to life—as they were.

*(Also undated.)*

. . . When our Queen was telling Robert how much she admired his wife, he said, "Those who only knew her by her works, did not know the best part of her". The Queen replied very earnestly: "Oh, how easily I can believe that!"

* His daughter-in-law.

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*(May 30, 1893.)*

. . . You ask me of Robert's experience of the stage. He was fond of the drama . . . but his experience of the actual realities of the stage of his day, was utterly distasteful and disenchanting. He was naturally very pleased at the production of *Strafford*—the play of a very young man, brought out by Macready at Drury Lane, was considered an exploit—but *The Blot* was nothing from first to last, except a vexation of spirit—he would not allow me to be present at the first night. The incessant asking for alterations chafed him.

*(June 23, 1893.)*

. . . Robert seldom went to the theatre in later years, except to see his friend Salvini, or a play by his well beloved Tennyson. He had not much sympathy with the elaborate decoration and dressing of the Lyceum, but I can answer of his having gone with delight to see a drama of Michael Field's performed —had he still been with us. [*This probably refers to the play "A Question of Memory"; produced at the Independent Theatre, on October 27, 1893.*] Do not let either yourself or Edith be discouraged at partial eclipse. Remember the middle part of Robert's career, when none of his works were sold. He outlived it; so will you.

*(January 3, 1896.)*

. . . Robert always said he would like to be offered the Laureateship, for the pleasure of refusing it. He thought poetry out of and beyond the judgment of politicians; and said he would equally decline the verdict of Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury, both of whom he admired in their own sphere, but neither of whom he thought capable of understanding poetry.

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# A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

## REMARKS ON RECENT SHOWS

*by Francis Fergusson*

THE THEATRE GUILD'S production of Shaw's *Too True to be Good* deserves a place at the head of the list of recent shows. It is true that the Guild's patron saint is out of date, like the Guild's idealism but, unlike the Guild, he knows it. The sub-title of his new play is "A Collection of Stage Sermons by a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature". The sermonizers include a hypochondriac rich girl, who tires of being ill (Hope Williams); her nurse, who is bored with the social position which is thrust upon her, and seeks love (Beatrice Lillie); a preaching burglar (Hugh Sinclair); a Colonel who likes to paint in water-colours (Ernest Cossart); a Napoleonic British Tommy who prefers to be a private (Leo G. Carroll); a sergeant who reads *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Frank Shannon), and an atheist who has lost faith in godless science (Claude Rains). They all preach wittily and intelligently at each other for three acts, speaking so quickly that it would be impossible to mention all the paradoxes they exhume and trot out briskly for a final airing before the footlights. Shaw, also, produces brightly all his familiar devices: the irrelevant absurdity of the story; the characters that turn out to be so charmingly different from what he leads us to expect; the delightful fooling which comes from time to time to relieve the seriousness of the argument. But this play has a new depth, which comes from the fact that Shaw no longer believes himself: he seems to be folding up his box of tricks, putting away his toys.

Shaw's characters are of course always Shaw and therefore never real personages in their own right. Each one has a mask—servant-girl, atheist, or apoplectic Colonel—which he claps on in the intervals of his Shavian garrulity. The Guild's production comes nearer than any I have ever seen to realizing this essential artificiality of the Shavian play and the Shavian characters. Miss Hope Williams and, even more, Miss Beatrice Lillie were well chosen for a kind of dryness and thin brightness of colouring which they both have in their performances and which is closely related to Shaw's own quality. Miss Williams did not try for a characterization, however—she was just the same sensible, gruff, fashionable embarrassed girl that she has been in all her shows. Miss Lillie is more supple and has, besides, her famous talent for monkeyshines in pantomime, whereby she made the nurse more amusing than Shaw intended. Mr. Cossart was excellent as Colonel Tallboys, and the rest of the cast clicked, to my ear, as neatly as one could wish. Mr. Sinclair, the burglar, turns out to be a handsome young modern Jeremiah, and it falls to his lot to deliver the final monologue, wherein Shaw thunders, with a new impressiveness, that we are falling into a bottomless pit; that we live in the City of Destruction; and that the world is coming to an end. The climax of this mono-



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logue (while the lights go down on Mr. Jorgulesco's excellent circus-like setting, and the stage-smoke from the city of destruction billows up) is a kind of limping heroic couplet, which, for some reason, is very moving. The young preacher (burglar-Sinclair-Shaw) has been crying that he was born to preach, and that he will go on preaching—

> However late the hour and short the day,
> And even if I have nothing to say—

or something like that. Mr. Leslie Banks, the director, deserves great credit for all his work: for engaging Mr. Jorgulesco to do the settings, and above all for that final moment, in which he manages to mingle the smell of circus sawdust with the smell of fire and brimstone.

### *Miss Lord and Miss Taylor*

Miss Pauline Lord and Miss Laurette Taylor, like Miss Katharine Cornell, find themselves all dressed up in slightly old-fashioned stage personalities with no place to go. Miss Lord was seen, earlier this season, in a short-lived play by Mr. Dan Totheroh, called *Distant Drums*. It was a rather inept play about a wagon-train going West, with a woman who joins the Indians because of some ill-defined spiritual affinity she has with them. The play need not detain us, but its nostalgia was the proper mood for Miss Lord, and the slightly holier-than-thou suffering other-worldliness of the woman who joins the Indians gave her a chance to repeat her characteristic effects. Also, her voice and diction are right in a play about plains-people, where the uncouthness may be accepted as helpless and touching. She was less at home in her last production, an early Milne play called *The Truth About Blayds*. She didn't fit with the rest of the cast, who understood better what sentimental parlour comedy should be, and who have crisper and more English diction. Mr. Worlock, Mr. Lawford, and Miss Effie Shannon made the evening; for they are light, amusing and neat, with the appearance of ease which comes only through experience and a carefully acquired technique. There were signs that Miss Lord was trying for that style, but she held the center of the stage only in a few emotional moments.

Miss Taylor presented two old Barrie plays, *Alice-Sit-By-The-Fire*, and *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, which she cut in half. She showed a sound instinct in doing them as "period" pieces—it was kinder to the plays, and it brought out better her peculiar theatrical quality. Refined, well-brought-up, comfortable and tender, and dressed in the overskirts and fringes of thirty years ago, *Alice* was not so much burlesqued as realized more sharply with the aid of the perspective that time gives. Miss Taylor was aware of everything, humorously, yet ready to melt at any moment—the Barrie tears-and-smiles formula caught while still fresh and offered as the quaint bibelot it is bound to seem to us. And then, in *The Old Lady*, a variation on the formula—an excellent charwoman characterization; mother-love, handsome soldier going off to war, and the atmosphere of *Over There* and King and Country. It is to be hoped that more of our stars will take a suggestion from Miss Taylor, and give us plays which they have liked and which have nourished them. It would be one way to remind us that our stage has a past, even though it be a rather sweetish and stuffy past.

### *Riddle Me This*

This is a very snappy detective play, by Mr. Daniel N. Rubin, wherein the doctor finishes strangling his wife before your eyes as the curtain rises. The doctor departs, and

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then enter Detective Captain McKinley (Thomas Mitchell) and Kirk, a newspaper man (Frank Craven). The rest of the play is made up mainly of the affectionate wisecracking of Messrs. Craven and Mitchell; the perpetual consumption of bootleg whisky, and the occasional sinister machinations of the doctor (Charles Richman). Mr. Craven and Mr. Mitchell are past masters of this kind of thing, and Mr. Mitchell, besides, is trying with some success to make a character come to life. There is also a gangster, Reed, played to the life, or what I imagine to be the life, by Mr. Gerald Kent. (Why are the gangsters of the Broadway stage so convincing, with their double-breasted suits, their shifty eyes, and the unmentioned suggestion that they've got a gat?) Miss Erin O'Brien-Moore is brought on the stage in acts two and three, and she is very beautiful, but she is given practically nothing to do. I can never see Miss O'Brien-Moore without remembering her performance in Mr. Cummings's *him* —the best American stage-piece, and the one the newspaper reviewers were most joyously unanimous in thumbing their noses at.

*Hot-Cha!*

Ziegfield in *Hot-Cha!* proves again that he knows how to put on a genuinely showy show: 75—GLORIFIED GIRLS—75; and a big band, and a gaudy Mexico, and a bull, and a bull calf, and Lupe Velez, and Bert Lahr, and I don't know how many dollars worth of bangles, and a lot thrown in. The dialogue is pretty flat—"I like y-ou!", "It's Prudential!"—and Bert Lahr is overworked, and those who provide the love-interest and the singing are rather forlorn and embarrassing—poor little rich girls and boys, they are on the stage, with fat contracts and nice eyes—but the travelling salesmen eat it up; and how, without their guffaws, could it continue to be the big, prosperous, impudent, good-humoured show that it is? The dancing is extremely well staged by Bobby Connolly, who continues to develop his chorus work in the direction of pantomime. Good Broadway choruses nowadays usually have a kind of structure, or a little story, and so utilize the well-drilled routines to get a richer and more humorous effect. The effect is to make the chorus part of the action, instead of a mere perfunctory interlude, benefiting chorus and action both, and making a more consistent genre out of musical comedy. A comedian like Bert Lahr also benefits by this development. He is not very good as a wisecracker, but he is delightful in a pantomimic dance he does. Lupe Velez is the best in the cast. She relies neither on a comedian's ancient jokes nor on the stencilled sweetness of our platinum blondes, but only on her lively stage sense as she changes warmly with all the little twists of the story. Her beauty, in a word, is alive. She is also a graceful though not a well-trained dancer, and a keen mimic. Towards the end of the show she is given a chance to take off several well-known movie stars, which she does with a few bold and accurate gestures and poses. She even knows how to sing "blues" songs, and it is strange to associate the minor moanings of jazz with her bright little Latin personality.

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# ABOUT BOOK-COLLECTING

*by Wilfred Partington*

## *The Untold Tale of Lewis Carroll*

*London, March.*

THE CENTENARY of Lewis Carroll has been duly celebrated—even to the unprecedented extent of a Prayer of Thanksgiving for his gift of laughter being offered in an English cathedral. The celebrators—or most of them—have only been some thirty-three years out in their reckoning. It was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson who was born in 1832; and the shy mathematician, dwelling in the Groves of the Immortals with those other Lords of Nonsense—Lear and Gilbert—would mildly object that Lewis Carroll was not born until 1865, for the purpose of escorting Alice, under the rose, out of his secret Wonderland.

There have been the usual appreciations; and one or two of Dodgson's girl-child friends have re-searched the fast-dimming past for reminiscences of that grown-up child in his Oxford rooms, with his camera, and his fancy dresses, and his lovely toys. I cannot say that they have given us any new impressions of him. Collingwood's is the chief *Life* of Dodgson; and it admirably served its initial purpose. But does it give us the complete picture of the man? I do not think so. There is a remarkable "Life and Letters of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson" yet to be done; and the writer of it will need to go far beyond Collingwood; he will need to use the many revealing and unpublished letters of the author which are strewn throughout the United States and the collections in England—to acquaint himself with friendships other and not less surprising than those already, although inadequately, recorded.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is, rightly, one of our collected authors, and yet, despite his considerable Bibliography, an author considered by several eminent bibliophiles to have a very definitely limited collecting appeal. Take away the first editions of *Alice, Through the Looking-Glass, The Hunting of the Snark,* and the two *Sylvie and Bruno*s, and the rest is on a far different plane. My own view is that, apart from his few best known works, there is more scope for collecting interest in his letters and MSS, especially in view of what has been said about his biography. There is more to be revealed about Dodgson from his correspondence than from his other Carrolliana. Collingwood made suppressions even in the comparatively small amount of correspondence he edited. The definitive editor and biographer must cast his



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net wide and give us everything of value. He will also have his author's Diaries, which the nephew Mr. C. H. W. Dodgson is now preparing for publication: here, again, we are likely to have suppressions, for Mr. Dodgson writes: "It is my intention that the publication of the diaries shall shed an absolutely authentic light on my uncle's life; but archaic as my methods may seem to the reader of modern diaries, I propose deliberately to exclude any passage which may cause pain or annoyance to any living person".

### REVEALING LETTERS TO A CHILD-FRIEND

I have had two interesting experiences in connection with correspondence of the creator of *Alice*—both of them having collecting significance. The earliest experience introduced me to one of Lewis Carroll's child-friendships not described by Collingwood, who missed the use of a most valuable series of letters. This friendship was with Miss Maud Standen, daughter of General Standen; and it was owing to the fact that she was living abroad prior to and after her marriage that Collingwood was unable to include her correspondence in the *Life* published in 1898. The letters to Miss Standen (now Mrs. Ffooks) were written between the years 1869 and 1893. They are typically Carrollian. In them the author explains his method of working:

> I *can't* write a story straight on . . . I write a bit in one part of the book, then a bit in another part, and so on, all consecutively, and send it off to the printer to be set up in slip and rearranged hereafter. Once when I jumped out of one of the *last* chapters into one of the early ones he wrote, in the margin of the MS: "Is there not some want of connection here?"!!! I should rather think there was!

Miss Standen seems to have asked for the derivation of some of the words in the Jabberwock ballad; which brings an illuminating reply—as, for example, "to burble: if you take the three verbs 'bleat', 'murmur', and 'warble', and select the bits I have underlined, it certainly makes 'burble': though I'm afraid I can't distinctly remember having made it that way". There is even information which bibliographers have been glad to seize upon: "I may as well give you the opportunity of choosing the colour of the cover [*The Hunting of the Snark*]. I have had them bound in various-coloured cloths"—a delightful whim, but deucedly plaguy to collectors and cataloguers.

This hitherto unknown correspondence was placed in my hands by Mrs. Ffooks; and by arrangement with her I edited and issued a privately printed pamphlet reproducing the best of the letters. This first edition consisted of twenty-six copies, which were distributed among friends and interested bookmen. The number was decided upon as being sufficient for the immediate purpose, and with no idea of making a rarity. Alas! I must confess that for years I have been seeking for a copy of the pamphlet, to say nothing of other collectors who want one.

### THE AUTHOR AND THE ARTIST

It was in connection with this publication that the late Harry Furniss, the illustrator of *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893) told me two reminiscences of the author. Furniss was seven years illustrating the two books; and he found Dodgson very difficult to work with. Even the minutest detail was methodically discussed by him in letters which were codified—a method of corresponding to which the artist refused to conform. Lewis Carroll, added Furniss, was very interested in the first appearance on the stage of his young friend Irene Vanbrugh. But an incident at the theatre made him furiously indignant. "Dear innocent soul!" said Furniss. "He did not see

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why he should not enter the stage door and make for the dressing-rooms; when—much to his indignation—he was pulled up by the door-keeper with 'Want to see Miss Irene Vanbrugh, does you? You clear out: we don't want you old prying clergymen hanging round here'."

My other experience relates to the time of the sale of the *Alice* MS for the extraordinary sum of $75,000 (par). I was at Sotheby's examining a book. In the catalogue of the sale being held there that day appeared a long "run" of holograph letters from C.L.D., each lot having about the same length of description. A young bookman of long acquaintance, who had recently embarked in the antiquarian book-trade, came to me with the catalogue and said he wished to buy one or two of the letters. Which did I recommend? Now there was one—and only one—which struck me as being remarkable. It was brought out for "view"; and I pointed out its biographical interest. In the result I learned that the letters realized an average price of $15 to $25 each—so far as I remember now; and the one I had specially recommended was secured by the young bookseller within that average. A few months later I was lunching with one of America's leading rare-book dealers. After our coffee he began showing me, with pardonable pride, some of his latest and privately acquired treasures. Suddenly he stopped, went to another case, and brought back a small binding-case which he put into my hands, observing: "But look at that for a curious item". I opened the case; and there—to my surprise—lay the identical Carroll letter, complete with typescript notes emphasizing its interest. I was of course suitably impressed; but refrained from mentioning my acquaintance with its provenance. The next time I chanced to see the young bookseller who had acquired the letter at Sotheby's, I casually enquired about it. He said he had sold it to another bookseller at a good profit. It is fair to assume that the other dealer also made a satisfactory gain. So that even if it passed through no further hands prior to reaching the American expert, the price of the letter increased to a very considerable extent by the time it found a home in some library. This is merely in the routine of dealing in books and MSS; and I should have left the incident unrecalled did it not illustrate how an item—which was originally secured at the same figure as others of comparative unimportance—quickly rose in value by its exceptional interest being brought out. The point is that the potentialities of letters, manuscripts, and books are very likely to be overlooked unless they are examined with care and knowledge. This is where the collector specializing in an author or subject is often at a considerable advantage. In the collecting world the old adage should be varied to read: Familiarity breeds bargains.

### AN ISSUE OF ISSUES

Collectors and bibliographers have been much interested for some time in discussions regarding the usage of the word "edition" and its branch terms—"impression", "reissue", and "reprint". Of late controversy has concentrated upon the terms impression and issue. One group of bookmen advocates, *inter alia*, the abandonment of the term impression; while on the other hand there is a school which would have more rather than fewer terms; and puts up a good case against the opposing critics. This is not one of those dull controversies of academic interest beloved of antiquarians: it is a subject of increasing urgency, and one which comes home sooner or later to every collector and researcher. There is now hopeless confusion in the use of the terms mentioned. The trouble

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has arisen owing (*a*) to the demand for meticulous bibliographical description of old first and early editions and the discoveries of the different technical practices and doubtful tricks of their printers; and (*b*) to the development of modern publishing which, with its large editions, its stereotyping, binding vagaries, et cetera, leads to such a variety of issues. It is not for collectors alone that bibliographical science has developed to the extent it has. However fine—and perhaps sometimes it may appear finicking—the distinctions noted between first and subsequent issues of the many considerations limiting the "perfect" first, we have to remember that in the case of the original publication of old and classic books, the science which has been responsible for the discovery of such distinctions and has led to present classifications has been of immense service to literary criticism. We need only recall, for example, the great part played by bibliographical examination of the Shakespeare Quartos and Folios in the elucidation of Shakspeare problems, textually and as throwing light on the poet and his methods. When it comes to the difficulties of classifying the issues of more recent first editions, we are rather concerned with purely collecting interests than with that bibliographical elucidation which is "the handmaid of literary criticism". But the extent of that collecting interest makes it equally desirable that there should be uniformity of description in classification. It is a curious fact that although the controversy on the subject has been largely in England, America is just as involved. To certain extent the activities of American collectors and dealers have been responsible for the closer attention here to bibliographical description of rarities.

It is evident from the discussions which have already taken place that we are little if any nearer to a settlement of this issue of "issues". I do not propose to add my own views and recommendations for this reason: that the subject is only a part of a larger one. What is required is a standardized form of bibliographical descriptions. In achieving this the smaller issue of issues, impressions, reprints, et cetera, would be solved.

This subject of Standardized Bibliography is no new one. Before the war its need was recognized. Mr. T. J. Wise has described (*vide The Bookman's Journal*, Vol. XVIII. No. 16) how an informal committee of well-known bibliophiles—including Dr. Furnivall, Dr. Garnett, Buxton Forman, William Rossetti, Colonel Prideaux, and himself—used to meet at the house of R. A. Potts in South Audley Street, where they drew up a final plan of bibliographical description (which Mr. Wise has always adhered to) embracing such points as "Advertisements", "Issues", "Blank pages". Whether the informal plan worked out by this worthy group satisfactorily solves the difficulties which have led to the present controversy I cannot say—not having seen the specimens which Potts printed at his own expense. During the time I edited *The Bookman's Journal* (1919-1931) the need for Standardized Bibliography was several times urged, the last occasion being in No. 15, Vol. XVIII., in a stimulating paper by Mr. Simon Nowell Smith which was followed, in the next number, by a series of representative views.

The desirability of standardization of bibliographical description is obvious. It would do away with the present confusions and simplify the work of those who constantly use bibliographies. Nor need it limit the scope of individual bibliographers, who have always the notes (which cannot be standardized) to collations in which to expand themselves. In the course of initiating or editing over thirty Bibliographies, it has been my ex-

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perience that compilers were often perplexed as to the form of description they should follow; and would have welcomed a method to which they could work.

It ought not to be difficult to organize a committee of experts—not from any single society or group, but representative of all interests (including publishers) both American and English—to draw up a provisional form of description and definitions. This experimental scheme could be circulated for tests and criticisms; and then made the basis of a final standard. While I agree with Dr. R. B. McKerrow (whose admirable *Introduction to Bibliography* should be studied by all bookmen) in so many of his views on the subject, it does not seem to me to be as impossible as he considers to find a basis of Standardization which will suit both bibliographers and publishers.

THE USE OF FIRST EDITIONS

Mr. Harry Miller Lydenberg has a short paper in the current issue—excellent as usual—of *The Colophon*, in which he says in *Some Observations on Modern Firsts*:

> You're right in saying that the collector who reads his modern firsts weakens their points as collectors' items unless he is more careful than most of us. . . . There's not the slightest doubt that the man who collects modern firsts and tries to use his books for ordinary reading purposes has a hard row to hoe. No one can object to his reading. But he's trying to do two decidedly opposing things, and one of them must suffer.

I appreciate the intention of Mr. Lydenberg's *Observations* more than the effect. The silly gibe that book-collectors are afraid to spoil their first editions by reading them is heard too frequently; and I regret that weight should be given to a criticism which is not always as serious as Mr. Lydenberg's takes it to be. I do not agree that the bookman who collects modern first editions and tries to read them without reducing their value has "a hard row to hoe"—although he sometimes has a bad dose of literature to stomach. Of course, if we habitually tear out end-papers to light our pipes with, or throw our book at the cat, or bend it cover to cover so that people cannot blush at what we're reading . . . then, of course, it is useless to put it in the best bookcase in the hope that some day it will sell at ten thousand percent profit. Personally, I have for years received inscribed presentation copies from author-friends whose books are collected; and my not inexperienced eye is unable to detect any weakening of their "points" because they have been read. But let us put the matter to the test. Let Mr Lydenberg send me first issues of the first editions of, say, Hardy's *Desperate Remedies*, Conrad's *Chance*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice*, and I'll wager to read them (without wearing new gloves) and show no "weakening of their points" (bibliographical or literary) provided that if I win I keep the copies.

HENRY WILLIAMSON

There is a fairly consistent, if not exciting, demand for first editions of Henry Williamson, which (says Mr. Girvan) although "they have steadily increased in value . . . can still be obtained at reasonable prices". Hence the publication by the Alcuin Press (Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire) of *A Bibliography and a Critical Survey of the Works of Henry Williamson* by I. Waveney Girvan. Beginning with *The Beautiful Years* (1921), Mr. Girvan collates seventeen works, in addition to revised editions of *The Flanders Plain, The Beautiful Years, Dandelion Days*, and *The Dream of Fair Women*. The "authentic bibliographical annotation

(*Continued on page ix, rear advertising section.*)

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# THE NEW BOOKS

POEMS: 1928-1931 *by Allen Tate* (SCRIBNER'S $2.00)

THE best poems of this book should become the texts of the next generation as Mr. Eliot's poems were of the last, since they deal with the central problem of tradition, that is, those historical manners of thought and action which were once habitual operations of the self and whose loss is our modern disease. But Mr. Eliot only diagnosed, and, as far as he was said to have "expressed his generation", probably furthered the disease. Mr. Tate in his first-order poems, the most profound though not the best-written of the twentieth century, has offered the cure; he has made familiar what is available of Western tradition. These poems are: (*a*) *The Cross, The Twelve, The Eagle, Last Days of Alice*; (*b*) *Emblems I* (*Maryland Virginia Caroline*), *Mother and Son*; and, lastly, the *Ode to the Confederate Dead*.

Tradition in its two meanings refers either to the racial heritage embodied in history, literature, and religion, that is, "the tradition of Western Man", or to the particular social situation, the family, that is, "the traditions handed down from father to son". The poems grouped under *a* are concerned with the first meaning of tradition; those under *b* with the second. Scientific monism, which regarded the complete man of tradition as "all infinite, function, depth and mass without figure; a mathematical shroud", and its concrete world, for him the center of the universe, as merely a "black apple in the light", and which by destroying the concept of evil that alone gave moral meaning to life destroyed also the continuity of Western tradition, is criticized in *The Eagle* and *Last Days of Alice*; and the answer is definitely put in the closing lines of this last poem:

> O God of our flesh, return to us your wrath
> Let us be evil, could we enter in
> Your grace, and falter on the stony path!

Mr. Tate's symbols are more compelling than Mr. Eliot's rats in the waste land, and there are fewer odd ends. The scattered wit of earlier poems, for example, is here integrated in the biting burlesque of nineteenth-century Alice: "Turned absent-minded by infinity".

Mr. Tate has a reputation, or notoriety, for "intellectual poetry", but the opinion is mistaken and likely to mislead readers as to his qualities and achievements. For, although he deals with major themes and has a wide range of reference, he is never recondite in the manner of Stevens, Pound, and Eliot, and his poetry is "difficult" only in that the basic attitude is remote from popular assumptions. Indeed, some knowledge of his criticism may be needed to make the attitude clear to a reader; as, for example, in *Records I. A Dream*, some knowledge of the quality of moral unawareness which Mr. Tate imputes to the phrase "innocent of sin" is needed to make the closing lines of the poem seem anything but violent and unnecessary. But an intellectual poetry, if the common distinction between "emotional" and "intellectual" has valid grounds, is concerned with verbal definition. Formally, its lines are self-contained, having, usually, a kind of "crackly" flavour. The classical example is Pope.



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Comparison of Tate's *Mother and Son* with the well-known *Eros Turannos* of E. A. Robinson is instructive, for they are representative poems of their authors and have a similar use of generalized, almost allegorical, imagery (thus Robinson's trees and sea, and Tate's cuttlefish and wallpaper) and they are concerned with similar dramatic situations. But Robinson's method is intellectual and expository; it defines the general situation. The meaning is almost wholly verbal, that is, contained in the dictionary meanings of the individual words, and is emphasized by the insistence of a monotonous metre which proceeds measuredly from beginning to end of the stanza. Tate's method is rather emotional and dramatic; he defines a particular situation at a given time and place. The rhythms hang suspended at line-ends, rounding off into succeeding lines so that each stanza is one unit of suspense, while the rhythm and fulness of sound define a meaning that, in the dictionary sense of the words, is quite vague. The fourth stanza of *Mother and Son* and second of *Eros Turannos* probably illustrate the point most clearly, but the distinction is typical of both poets' work in general.

In one sense, however, Mr. Tate's poetry is "intellectual". He must validate his initial apprehensions by figuring them out step by step. The outlines of Christian and classical civilization still persist in contemporary education and affairs, but the fulness of realization which made them habitually operative in daily life is gone out. Just as, when someone proposes a mathematical puzzle, not knowing the proper formula, we proceed warily from postulate to postulate, *feeling* our way along but using *intellectual* forms, the modern poet must reconstruct his tradition by first understanding what he wishes to be, and understanding it so completely and persistently that the condition finally becomes. And the result once imaginatively realized in a poem is available for all close readers of the poem.

Thus the very fine poem, *Message from Abroad,* represents a *thinking into* history, through "Provence, the Renaissance, the Age of Pericles" to the red-faced settlers of Southern United States; and this abstract sense of history, now become a habit (*habitus*), issues at last in the particularity of such a poem as *Emblems I* (*Maryland Virginia Caroline*):

Out of that source of time my farthest blood
Runs strangely to this day
Unkempt the fathers waste in solitude
Under the hills of clay

And, likewise, because the details had *not* been thought into one by one, the *Sonnets of the Blood* are unanimously failures; and the first nine lines of *VI,* which deal with "arteries" and "corpuscles" are probably the most ridiculous Mr. Tate has published despite the fact that his earlier book, *Mr. Pope and Other Poems* (1928), contains, outside of its four or five great poems, more bad poetry than any other volume of the century—but "bad" through ambition, because, no matter how poor the writing was, the attitude was always the serious one of traditional morality.

And if the reader feels that this abstract approach to tradition is an intrusion, Mr Tate agrees, but maintains that it is the only available way. "How may a Southerner take hold of his Tradition?", he writes. "The answer is by violence", the violence of rationalization. From this attitude comes the violent diction of these poems, wherein "splintered" and "hurled" are common words. However, in the future he will probably continue in the lower-toned manner of the *Emblems, Records,* and *The Oath,* and will tend to unite the two meanings of tradition, which in a familiar society, are one. A too-early

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attempt at this synthesis probably accounts for the disjunct character of the *Ode to the Confederate Dead*, which is nevertheless one of his finest poems and better than Mr. Eliot's similar *Gerontion*. The disjunctness of modern major poetry results from a setting down of a series of statements from the author's point of view, without his ever exploring or defining poetically that point of view. *The Waste Land* and *The Marriage of Faustus and Helen* will serve as examples.

Successful definition, however, leads to simplicity, and tends toward the center rather than the edge of tradition; that is, more towards what men have in common than what they have privately, as individuals. The poetic effect of such outlandishly common statements as "Men cannot live forever / But they must die forever", as it appears in context, and especially the word "providence" in the following quotation—

> For love so hates mortality,
> Which is the providence of life,
> She will not let it blessèd be
> But curses it with mortal strife . . .

is the measure of Mr. Tate's superiority to Mr. Eliot and Mr. Crane.

J. V. CUNNINGHAM

SOUVENIRS: MY LIFE WITH MAETERLINCK *by Georgette Leblanc* (DUTTON. $4.00)

IT WOULD be easy to poke fun at the Georgette Leblanc-Maeterlinck romance. When Maeterlinck wrote a play about Georgette all the rest of the characters in the fable committed suicide; he was naturally reluctant to present his tribute *viva voce*, so one day as Georgette lay asleep he sneaked up and put his manuscript in her lap. It was a rude awakening. Several well-turned, though over-ingenious, compliments were required to soothe the offended lady. No one, Maeterlinck affirmed, would dream of committing suicide when she was around; she was much too beautiful and accomplished; the radiation of her perfections was balm to every beholder. Some day, Maeterlinck intimated, he would doubtless attain a superior vigour and insight and be able to devise a less sanguinary solution. He did: around 1919 he abandoned Mme Leblanc with an abundance of dramatic incident unequalled in any of his plays, and he married somebody else.

This, then, is the book in a nutshell. And yet there is so much that won't go in any nutshell. Georgette's sufferings, for example. She must often herself have been very near suicide. She had set out to find a philosopher and magician; she discovered a creature of somewhat hesitant manner and nebulous features, with feet much like Charlie Chaplin's! She had dressed herself in cloth of gold and a diamond "blazed" on her forehead; he was wearing a long macfarlane, and she found that his principal recreation was bicycle-riding! She had drenched herself in the atmosphere of his introduction to Emerson's essays; but the favorite axiom of her moralist was: "When anyone makes you an offer, keep them waiting as long as you can and then ask them to triple the money". Yet this "union" endured twenty years, at least fifteen of which were "happy".

Paths cross and separate, as Georgette herself must have reflected on that lonely night during the war which she spent reading *Jude the Obscure*. And when the hero is by no means obscure but the spokesman of a whole epoch and the lady is known on the stages and platforms of two continents and has, in addition, a knack of saying rather more than she means, the record is bound to be an engrossing one.

ROBERTS TAPLEY

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AMERICA FACES THE FUTURE *edited by Charles A. Beard* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.00)

MR. BEARD'S book may be described as a kind of source-book for students of economic or social planning. Part I, *The New Intellectual and Moral Climate,* comprises a number of articles from the *Forum*, addresses by President Nicholas Murray Butler and Daniel Willard, and the pronouncement of the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, all dealing with the need of a new social order in relation particularly to capitalism, labour, banking, the standard of living, and similar matters. Part II, *Blue-Prints for a Planned Economy,* brings together the texts of such specific proposals as Mr. Beard's own five-year plan for America, President Butler's Southampton address on unemployment, the Gerard Swope plan of employment insurance, and the proposals of the Business and Employment Committee of the United States Chamber of Commerce and of Governors Roosevelt and La Follette.

The general impression is that while the idea of planning on a comprehensive scale is much in the air, there is as yet no substantial agreement regarding either details or procedure. Mr. Beard himself, for example, outlines a national scheme in which a National Economic Council, operating through syndicates of affiliated corporations in the form of holding companies, is to control all large-scale industries. Mr. Swope's employment insurance plan, on the other hand, seems designed only for individual enterprises. The crux of the whole matter, of course, is how American industry, essentially individualistic save where public utilities are concerned, is to be brought to accept a centralized control, and on this point Mr. Beard's book fails to throw any satisfactory light. It is natural that Mr. Beard, as an advocate of planning, should in his incidental comments appear to emphasize the points in which the various proposals may be thought to agree, but he has done well to include in his collection of sources Mr. Hoover's Indiana speech of June 15, 1931, in which, as he says, Mr. Hoover "poured scorn on projects for large-scale and integrated planning" and "summarized the opposing philosophy with his accustomed display of acumen". The latter phrase, perhaps, leans to sarcasm, but the contentions of the address have still to be met.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

GERMANY'S ROAD TO RUIN *by Karl Friedrich Nowak* (MACMILLAN. $5.00)

THIS volume, following chronologically the same author's *Kaiser and Chancellor,* continues the intimate story of Germany's foreign policy from the chancellorship of Caprivi to that of Prince von Bülow. Into the period fall the rejection of the Russian proposal to renew Bismarck's treaty of "re-insurance", and the tortuous negotiations which first sought to bring England into the alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy, and later, when England had changed its mind refused the very favourable terms which England offered for an Anglo-German defensive alliance. The same years saw the Jameson raid and the South African war, the Armenian massacres, the Boxer rebellion in China, the Russo-Japanese war, and the Kaiser's spectacular visit to Tangiers.

The special interest of the book lies in the fact that it was written, like its predecessor in close coöperation with the ex-Kaiser, and hence may be presumed to give the story of events as the Kaiser is willing to have it told. As a revelation of the Kaiser's mentality the narrative is extraordinary. It shows the Kaiser

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as considerably more intelligent and honest than most critics have rated him, but ill-served by the laborious and devoted but unenlightened Caprivi, the stupid von Holstein, and the vagarious and secretive von Bülow. It was von Bülow who sent the Kaiser, against the latter's better judgment, to Tangiers in a visionary attempt to offset France and England in Morocco, and rejected England's overtures for an alliance. At the end of fifteen anxious years Herr Nowak sees the Kaiser's policy ending in "complete and final failure" and Germany "sinking into isolation".

If the imperial exile can also relish the sharp criticisms of his personality and public conduct which stud Herr Nowak's pages, he has reached a point of intellectual and moral detachment rare in rulers, for Herr Nowak does not hesitate to speak out. Interspersed with the narrative are lively and acid personal descriptions of the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, and of Caprivi, von Bülow and others, and an entertaining account, in the Kaiser's own words, of his interview with Cecil Rhodes when the latter was planning his Cape-to-Cairo railway. There is no more readable history of the period, and none which, on the personal side, is more fairly to be called indispensable. The excellent translation is by E. W. Dickes.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

CHINA: THE COLLAPSE OF A CIVILIZATION *by Nathaniel Peffer* (JOHN DAY. 3.50)

Two years ago Mr. Peffer wrote a commendably clear and thoughtful exposition of political and cultural conditions in the China of the present moment, which the John Day Company has just reissued. The old China, he points out, has disappeared; today one finds a region and a people, but not, at least in any strict sense, a nation. What has brought the present chaos is the impact of the West, disrupting the old social order and shaking the traditions upon which it rested, but leaving government, industry and social life distraught. Mr. Peffer traces briefly the influences brought to bear upon China by Europe, the United States, Japan, and Russia, examines the communist penetration, which he does not find very important as a constructive force, and exposes the disintegrating effects of much missionary activity. He has no program to offer, for China is what it is because of history, and it is to history that its future must be left. He does, however, foresee the probable spread of mass education and industrialization, the end of foreign business in (not with) China, and a period of isolation out of which another distinctive national culture may evolve. There is no better book for one who would understand the fundamental problems with which the Chinese people are struggling.

WILLIAM MACDONALD

FOLK-SAY: A REGIONAL MISCELLANY, 1931, *edited by B. A. Botkin* (UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS. $3.00)

THIS collection makes one think of those interesting old quilts in which each piece had its own story: there was a piece of grandma's wedding dress; there was little Emily's flowered challis; there was the plaid Aunt Mary had the summer John was born. But here there are homespun and strong blue denim too. Some pieces are more brightly coloured than others; some more quaint and homely; but every piece carries its tale.

This third annual volume of "folk material drawn from the life and treated creatively" is a work of variety and considerable richness

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which covers, in prose and poetry, many corners of the United States. *Folk-Say* is not exactly folk-lore, but is the expression of the new "regionalism" which seeks to develop a consciousness of the ancient wisdom and deeply rooted tradition in various areas. It aims, not for a narrowing of the interest but for a new realization of the significance of the regional as an essential part of the great human whole. So we have tales, poems, and sketches from the cattle ranges of Texas, the lumber camps of the North, the Kentucky mountains, the Rockies, the Southern plantations, the Nebraska sandhills, and other sections of the United States, by new writers and by ones already well known, each of whom has roots in the region of which he writes. *Folk-Say* is a true native product, and is of interest and value as an authentic expression of American regional culture.

ELIZABETH STEAD TABER

BACK YONDER: AN OZARK CHRONICLE *by Wayman Hogue* (MINTON, BALCH. $3.00)

THE material here is all homespun, coarse in weave and homely, but strong and durable, and in its strength and simplicity achieving a real beauty. Written by a native son of the Ozark country, it tells of that remote and almost unknown region as the author knew it as a boy—of the people, the customs, the dress, and the speech, and of the happenings that made up their lives. Moreover, it is almost the same life as that which he found there when he recently returned after a forty-year absence.

A one-room log cabin was his home; furniture and clothing, including the cloth itself, were home-made; pine knots and home-made candles were their lights; when the fire went out, they went to the nearest neighbour to "borry a chunk o' far". They grew all their food, except such things as sugar, salt, and coffee; trade was carried on by barter, and money was seldom seen. The region was a little world in itself, independent of the world outside, and within the region each home was a little world, self-contained and self-sustaining. But the life was not a meagre one—indeed, it was rich, for the people, having little, wanted for nothing; instead of a harsh existence, it seemed, to those who lived it, one of great enjoyment. Even today, radio and moving pictures mean little to them; the children, who had never seen a moving picture, did not want to go out with the author to a town where they might go to one—they were more interested in the annual barbecue.

The author, as a young man, left the mountains to go outside for an education, but he is at home with his people still. Told with understanding and a quiet humour, his chronicle is refreshing in its sincerity, and has a genuineness and a rich flavour of the place and the people. It is a real contribution to Americana; and, moreover, it shows how life can be lived simply, in its fundamentals with a satisfying completeness—but it is so lived only by those who are themselves fundamentally simple, genuine, and full of vigour

ELIZABETH STEAD TABER

MARIE LOUISE *by E. M. Oddie* (SCRIBNER'S $5.00)

MISS ODDIE does not attempt to present Marie Louise as a snow-white angel, but shows her as one for whom circumstances were usually a good deal too strong. Far from clever trained to obedience from her earliest youth married at eighteen to the man whose name had spelt fear and horror to her ever since she could remember, she was the tool alternately of father and husband. Yet in spite o

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her weakness, when she fell thoroughly in love, as she did with General Neipperg, she not only became his mistress and defied convention by keeping her illegitimate baby with her, but even went so far as to marry her one-eyed Count—appalling conduct for an Austrian Archduchess.

In spite of a rather too flowery style, Miss Oddie's narrative is simple, straightforward and interesting. She defends Marie Louise from the charge of deserting the Emperor, asserting that Marie Louise would willingly have gone with him to Elba. The second Empress and second "Autrichienne" emerges from these pages a human, weak, faulty but not unlovable woman, who did the best she could according to her lights and her abilities.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

MEMORIES OF THE WORLD WAR *by Robert Alexander* (MACMILLAN. $4.00)

THE memoirs of army men down through the ages have been characterized by a certain vigour of style but bluntness of expression, great detail in the discussion of strategy and tactics, an airing of prejudice and opinion, and what is often a delightful absence of tactful statement in regard to associates. So, in any case, with the memoirs of General Robert Alexander.

General Alexander from August 26, 1918 until May 6, 1919, was commander of the 77th Division—that heterogeneous division composed of the sons of New York City. Earlier in the war he had been attached to the Service of Supply and later had led a brigade of the 32nd Division. But his greatest service was directing the destinies of the 77th, especially in its heroic struggle against overwhelming difficulties through the Argonne Forest in the closing weeks of the war. During those weeks occurred the episode of the "lost battalion" which General Alexander maintains was never "lost", only cut off from its fellows in the 77th. In spite of the General's minutely detailed account of the campaigns in which he participated—along the Vesle and in the Argonne—the layman must feel the tragic intensity of those weeks which preceded November 6, when the 77th came out of the Forest upon the left bank of the Meuse and in the distance saw Sedan. When the Armistice put an end to all fighting, the 77th had made greater advance against the foe than any other Division and had served longer in the front line than any other National Army Division.

But General Alexander's war memoirs are more than a mere divisional history. Here is a picture of modern warfare—the actual fighting, the difficulty of maintaining supply, the need for sustained morale, together with the petty strife between personalities. There is also the portrait of a general who, himself a product of the school at Fort Leavenworth, has very certain ideas concerning the value of West Point training, a general who sees eye to eye with his fellows in regard to military preparedness, and agrees with his Commander-in-Chief concerning the time misspent on training the army for trench warfare. But this is no swivel-chair general, rather one who believes in being with his men as much as possible, working with them, building up their morale. There is a human side to his story, the telling of incidents of individual heroism and plucky courage, the bestowing of honour where due. Finally, one must not forget that after all these are the memoirs of a "Major General" who by his rough handling of his associates whose "tactical ability I had had occasion to doubt" may well occasion explosions in military circles.

E. FRANCIS BROWN

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AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES *by Edward Frank Humphrey* (CENTURY. $3.75)

THIS economic history of the United States, written for use in the colleges, is a striking example of the new interpretation of history consequent upon our modern realization of the importance and significance of economic changes and development. Each age must rewrite its history, and it is obvious that today it should be written in terms of commerce, industry and wealth. How far Professor Humphrey goes in this direction is indicated in the very opening sentence of his introduction. "The world has become a great business machine," he states; "modern history, which begins with the discovery of America, is the story of the integration of the entire globe into a single great economic unit, modern 'Business'."

With this extreme point of view Professor Humphrey largely ignores political and social developments in our history and concentrates upon economics to the virtual exclusion of everything else. It would be a curious impression of America which the student who confined his reading to this book would gather, and one no more true to the facts than that presented by the older political histories. "Business" may in a sense dominate the modern world, but politics still plays its part upon both the American and the international stage and cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless this study of the economic forces behind our national development has its usefulness, and while we may be disappointed in a style which unnecessarily makes it a good deal less readable than the political histories, the ground is fully and carefully covered. The change from the agricultural era through the beginnings of big business to the full flowering of our commercial and industrial supremacy is described with a wealth of detail and a startling array of factual material.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

SINCE MRS. EDDY *by Altman K. Swihart* (HOLT. $3.00)

THIS is a twin biography of Mesdames Stetson and Bill, two followers of the "Leader" named in the title, who diverged from her established church into paths of innovation, or of heresy, according to the reader's point of view. The author's point of view, actually Lutheran, has skilfully been made to appear identified in turn with that of each subject: mingled with the narration of almost fabulous events, there is simple exposition (with only implied criticism) of the doctrines involved. The established church necessarily emerges in this treatment as something like the villain of both pieces. The book is therefore not the authorized "latter-day" history from Boston that the title leads one to expect, but a careful and well-organized inquiry into two oddly different sects which have been repudiated by the sect in which they had their origin.

Mrs. Augusta E. Stetson and Mrs. Annie C. Bill both adopted Christian Science at about the age of forty, but that is perhaps the only similarity between their careers. Mrs. Stetson, preceding Mrs. Bill by twenty years, began her work in the eighties with the organization of the first "C. S." church in New York, the scene of her exploits for four spectacular decades. When the million dollar edifice was dedicated in 1903 "To the Reverend Mary Baker Eddy", it was free of debt, thanks to Mrs. Stetson's determination to "demonstrate money". This was only one of the effects of her assertive personality which created for her both disciples and ene-

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mies. It appears that Mrs. Eddy herself at length became the most important of the latter: for, although in 1908 she called Mrs. Stetson her "very best beloved student", one year later she secretly gave the order for Mrs. Stetson's excommunication. A year after, Mrs. Eddy died; Mrs. Stetson proclaimed a prophecy of imminent resurrection which she continued to affirm until her own death eighteen years later at the age of eighty-six. This final period she spent in denouncing the "so-called hierarchy" of the Boston authorities who directed the "church militant", and in building up her "Spiritual Church Triumphant", which she was convinced that Mrs. Eddy's "presence" was directing her to form in accord with the "true doctrine" of freedom from materiality even in church organization: a transcendent church which should actually be "a state of mind". To spread her message she had recourse to choral organizations, for which she composed "spiritual music"; to paid newspaper and magazine publicity, on which she spent nearly a million dollars; and finally to radio-broadcasting from her own station, WHAP, to the tune of another million. These ethereal messages consisted of attacks on Catholicism, on Christopher Columbus, and on *The Star Spangled Banner*: the Church Triumphant advocated Christian Science, Leif Ericson, and a song entitled *America* which Mrs. Stetson had composed.

The same illustration of "religious imagination playing upon human experiences" emerges from the account of Mrs. Bill's very different career. Her "Church of the Universal Design" now numbers perhaps one thousand adherents scattered through England, the United States, Syria, and Australia. This organization continues to function in the expectation of one day replacing all other religions, which it will supersede when the "Common Consent" of humanity has been accorded to "the omnipotence of infinite Mind" and attendant doctrines of "present immortality, collective consciousness, the sevenfold system of the Universal Design", and (less oracularly phrased) the identification of Britons and North Americans with the lost tribes of Israel. Mrs. Annie Bill became a Christian Scientist in 1905, but resigned from her London church five years later as a protest against official action. From Mrs. Eddy's death in 1910, Mrs. Bill endeavoured constantly to convince the officials that she alone was qualified by her "advanced understanding" to succeed the deceased Leader. In 1914 she began a campaign for the small organization of her adherents to be accepted as the "True Mother Church", in which she even claimed as her own the property of the Boston organization. After fruitless litigation, and many changes of name for her group, Mrs. Bill began to expand her church on both sides of the Atlantic with the help of other converts who joined her on withdrawing from the Mother Church. The controversies continued during the twenties, coming to climaxes over medical coöperation, which Mrs. Bill endorses; over prohibition, which Mrs. Bill denounces; and finally over exposures of Mrs. Eddy's use of morphine and her unacknowledged borrowings from the writings of others. In consequence of this, early in 1929 Mrs. Bill repudiated Mrs. Eddy as a merely "human personality" who had been "basically dishonest", and gradually withdrew from Christian Science.

Mr. Swihart has documented his narrative with twenty pages of bibliography and thirty-five of notes which amplify his points besides citing chapter and verse of his authorities—an indispensable array of evidence in these two almost incredible modern histories.

HANSELL BAUGH

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A HISTORY OF SCIENCE *(New Edition Revised and Corrected) by William Cecil Dampier-Whetham* (MACMILLAN. $4.00)

THE history of Science is a subject as important as it is fascinating. For if we are no longer disposed to see truth only in change and in the history of change, we have begun to realize that it is only a knowledge of the history of science in its wider relations that saves from dogmatism, whether it be dogmatic idealism or dogmatic materialism.

Between these two poles science has oscillated up to now. But oppositions in thought are generally solved by the discovery that they are only the two sides of the same question, and that both are true at once. Such at present appears to be the solution of the fundamental problem involved in the relation of science to philosophy and religion; namely, the question of Determinism and Free Will. That both can exist at once has seemed an impossible paradox. It no longer seems impossible since the break-up of the so-called "Laws of Nature" and the reduction of supposed cause and effect to the mathematical Theory of Probabilities. The discovery, as Mr. Dampier-Whetham points out, that there is no reason why any particular atom should behave in one way rather than another, has almost literally taken the ground from under our feet. Just as it is possible to predict within reasonable limits of accuracy how many men between fifty and sixty will die in Great Britain in 1932 but impossible to make a prediction with regard to a particular man, so is it with the smallest units observable by science. In the sphere of philosophy this simply means that events are roughly determined in the mass, but the individual is to all intents and purposes free.

That the philosophers themselves should admit this is a striking victory for common sense over logic. The amateur philosophers have always been less hampered in this respect than the philosophers of the schools. Samuel Butler remarked that Science and Religion are reconciled in the minds of sensible men, but nowhere else. Dr. Johnson roundly declared that there was no theoretical argument in favour of the Freedom of the Will and no practical argument against it. The simple enunciation of commonsense perception is easier, however, than its rational justification. The most notable failure in this direction is Milton; the more he reasons about Fate, Free Will, Fore-knowledge Absolute, the more hopelessly confused he becomes. The most notable success is Tolstoy, a writer whose philosophy it is ill-considered to ignore. *War and Peace* is as successful in presenting the real case for the simultaneous existence of Determinism and Free Will, Chance and Design, as *Paradise Lost* is unsuccessful.

All this comes to mind in considering Mr. Dampier-Whetham's book, because the crucial point is in his final chapter on "Scientific Philosophy and Its Outlook". It is that it is no longer possible to refute a teleological view of the universe on scientific grounds. But this is far from saying that it is defensible to use scientific arguments to support teleology, a tendency which the writings of Whitehead, Eddington, and Jeans have greatly exaggerated. Against this fallacy a book like Mr. Dampier-Whetham's is a valuable safeguard. For the first time since Aristotle, with the possible exception of the seventeenth century, we are in a position to make a really philosophical synthesis of scientific thought. The wheel has come full circle, and where philosophy once pointed the way for science, science must now inform and impregnate philosophy. Only it would be premature to rush in after White-

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head, Eddington, and Jeans. We have not yet another Aristotle, nor even a Spinoza or a Goethe.

Any treatment in one volume of the vast subject that Mr. Dampier-Whetham has chosen is bound to be much less than perfect. The scientist may not find it straightforward enough, the philosopher will find it discontinuous and over-simplified; for the specialist there will be too little detail, while for the layman the detail will seem much too technical, especially in the sections on modern physics. Nevertheless, for most readers, it will provide information while provoking thought; and it is informed throughout with the enlightened common sense as traditional at Cambridge since Newton's day as the mathematical learning on which it is based.

JAMES ORRICK

BETTER LEFT UNSAID *by Daisy, Princess of Pless* (DUTTON. $5.00)

THIS diary, *Better Left Unsaid*, contains a fragmentary but remarkably effective description of European social life of pre-war days—dinners and balls, royal weddings, hunting parties, naval manoeuvres at Kiel, and almost feudal Christmas parties at Pless. Through its pages pass such personages as Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, William II of Germany and the Crown Prince, Russian Grand Dukes and Duchesses, with innumerable minor German royalties. The Princess of Pless was a popular figure in German society, and the audacity with which she constantly infringed the stiff Prussian etiquette was forgiven.

Yet she was never at home in Germany. This is the principal tragedy which the diary reveals. She never succeeded in taking Edward VII's fatherly advice by becoming "a good German", she never learned to resign herself to a purely ceremonial existence. More than this, although she lived with her husband on friendly terms, there was never any real understanding between them. "For many years", the Princess writes, "I existed as a German wife living under German rule, who must alter no arrangement in house, garden, or stables, without asking permission. I obeyed and smiled and made many true friends. At any rate it was a good piece of acting and as such was a success; I was quite pleased and proud of it—but it did not make me happy."

MARGARET WALLACE

MEN AND FORCES OF OUR TIME *by Valeriu Marcu* (VIKING. $2.50)

THESE studies—of Clemenceau, Lenin, Foch, Istrati, Mustafa Kemal, Chesterton, Mussolini, and others—are not to be read for information; they are brilliant essays on the ideas that motivate modern European politics. Marcu reduces each man to an idea; he exhibits the operation of the idea in recent history; he gives the idea a man's name and confronts it with a political circumstance. When the reaction has been completed, God will drop the named husk, the container of His idea, upon the dust-heap of history. Thus Foch is a tactical theory; Lenin is the dialectical method dogmatized; Clemenceau is a disillusioned positivism, which, renouncing gloomy meditation, transforms itself into the doctrine "that the aim of politics is to promote action in the crude form, not to foster dreams of harmony"; so he excites "reformatory energies", he opposes compromise; as premier he cultivates crises, that the springs of power may be stretched to the uttermost.

Such abstract subject matter demands concreteness and perspicuity in its treatment. But Marcu's style is needlessly difficult. Carlyle,

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writing of ideal forces, expanded the historical fact into a philosophical symbol; Marcu, on the other hand, leaps to the idea and decorates it with a confusing diversity of metaphor. The thought, which is simple enough, is dimly revealed in the streaming sparkle of epigram and irrelevant simile. He lacks, moreover, what college rhetorics call "evidence of unity"; so that only a second reading can distinguish between legitimate sketches of intellectual background and pleasure excursions on some philosophical hobby-horse.

PAUL HAINES

CONQUISTADOR *by Archibald MacLeish* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $2.50)

IN HIS old age Bernál Díaz, "thinking . . . how the doves would wheel at evening over [his] youth and the air's strangness", undertakes to write the true history of the Conquest of New Spain, "of that world's conquest and the fortunate wars". Now old, "poor: blind in the sun", he had once seen with his own eyes the battles under Cortés, Montezúma, "the armies of Mexico marching the leaning wind in their garments", "was young in that country". The lines of *Conquistador* are the shape of his own life, an heroic effort to preserve from time and the distortion of official historians the things he had known and the days he had lived. The man who writes these lines, recalling with such poignancy the smells, the colours and the sights of a new found land, may bear little resemblance to the real Bernál Díaz or to any of the Conquistadores, but again Aristotle is proved correct and poetry comes closer to truth than history: if Mexico was once conquered by marching men with pikes and matchlocks, here it is again conquered in verse equal to that of any craftsman practising today. This craftsmanship serves a remarkable sensitivity to the world of appearances and its reactions on the mind and senses. Perhaps it is indulging in a cliché to assert that Mr. MacLeish can make us "feel" the things he describes, can transfer to us the senses of the person of the poem, but that is what he does, and with an intensity and a sharpness which mark his unique place in English letters. We hear much talk of sharp, hard and crystalline verse; it is usually written with four stresses to the line, decided rhymes and a liberal use of such words as "crystal", "transparence", "clarity", "austere", "angles", "polished" (these come from five lines of Elinor Wylie's); but all these are indications of intention rather than accomplishment, just as grandeur is not to be achieved by the use of grand polysyllables. Mr. MacLeish uses no such devices and his vividness and exactitude issue from the congruity of his words with his objects, rather than from any aura his words give off independent of what they describe. At times he seems to strain language somewhat, but more often he is successful and can give us such perfections as "mallets have started the loud beams", "their bellies like knuckles of bronze", "the girls . . . their breasts alive" and the last line of the following:

> And our bread was dirty with weevils and grown scarce and the
> Rains began and the beans stank in the ovens
> And we soldiers were thoroughly tired of seafaring.

The quotations may serve to indicate the moods of the poem; pain and horror are recalled as well as beauty; the Conquistadores were men in a strange land, and strangeness, though beautiful when friendly, is terrifying when hostile. This latter feeling dominates a great deal of the poem, and perhaps aids in giving the sense of vastness which so many

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of the passages hold, of great stretches of sea, mountain, plain and jungle. Mr. MacLeish's rhythms are reminiscent of the old Anglo-Saxon poetry (at least as it stands in translation), but there is more to connect him with *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*; his Bernál Díaz knows well how all things of earth pass, how the things he remembers are "stopt like a stale tune", and this feeling of transience broods over the entire poem, not blurring images but making them more clear. There are, of course, times when Mr. MacLeish is ambiguous, yet, almost invariably, these are the transitions in the poem, the changes in time and place, when an old man's memory is likely to become cloudy and slur over what he does not hold important—nor, indeed, are the details of such passages important to the poem itself; for it is a series of scenes and actions whose significances become apparent in their total implicit relationship. But it need not be thought that Bernál's are too despairing recollections of, in Mr. Eliot's words, "the infirm glory of the positive hour"; he can well recall the spirit that moved him and his companions in the terrible conquest of "that well-swept town those towers and that island"; if he is now blind in the sun, still he can see in all its vividness "the shine of the Sun in that time".

From this we might move on to ask what the universal implications of the poem are. Is it an American *Iliad* and does it mirror the temper of our times? For the time being these are irrelevant questions; the poem proposes itself only as one man's account of the Conquest of Mexico, and what we must ask is how far it succeeds in its manifested intention, how true it is to human psychology, how well it pictures the earth's sights and sounds (in relation to our existence). "Superbly" must be the answer to all these, and *Conquistador* can be ranked in the far from crowded class of successful narrative poems. Technically *Conquistador* should stand as a paradigm for all writers of verse. The use of assonance, that most difficult of devices, is subtly and masterfully done, so that the whole poem echoes and re-echoes with a never too obvious music and we want to read it aloud, as we do all good poetry, whether it be the gnarled lines of Donne or the limpid ones of Herrick. The frequent use of lines ending with articles and prepositions should not be repellent when we consider that the words are required by the poet's use of vowels. The alliteration, to use a visual image, not only runs across the lines but down them, binding the bodies of the lines together as does the assonance the line-ends. Though there are no very marked changes in rhythm, Mr. MacLeish manages to vary his beat as the emotion changes, or as the action is slowed or accelerated, and these changes are contained within the rhythm of the poem as a whole. The wisdom of the almost exclusive use of the colon for punctuation is debatable; it seems a rather unnecessary measure, since the words themselves and the sense would doubtless indicate the halts sufficiently. Mr. MacLeish's prolific use of "and" runs the risk of defeating itself by having the reader slur over the word after, say, the first fifty pages. But any adverse criticism of prosody so able as Mr. MacLeish's smacks of impertinence.

GEOFFREY STONE

## PASSION: SIX LITERARY MARRIAGES

*by Robert Neumann* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.00)

GERMANS have already shown themselves to be peculiarly receptive to American innovations. This breezy little volume reveals the influence of American tabloid journalism upon German literature. It consists of six biograph-

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ical skits: how Shelley, while looking at skylarks, failed to notice that he was driving his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, into whoredom; how Strindberg's Baroness Wrangel betrayed him repeatedly with other men and, most horrible of all, with other women; how Dostoievski's first wife threw her infidelity up at him from her death-bed; how Goethe made Christiane Vulpius first his humble "niece", then his proud and monstrous wife; how Byron sent his lady to bed, then locked the door on himself and his sister; finally how Balzac died while tradesmen creditors broke into his house and while his wife, the Countess Hanska, was away with some other man. Herr Neumann's highlights, needless to say, invariably fall where the lubricity lies. One does not have to be a great scholar, moreover, to know that he has not only sensationalized but frequently falsified his material. But one would have to be an intransigent moralist indeed not to find some amusement in this irrepressibly slick little sextette. It gives this German so much pleasure to follow our bad example! Six loaves of our cheapest bread have come back to us and put our own bakeries to shame; we haven't a smut-slinger to compare with him, either for zest or for skill. Herr Neumann's German is done into English by Brian W. Downs, so expertly that the book does not read like a translation. In this, no doubt, it was aided by the fact that so much of its inspiration came originally from our tongue.

GERALD SYKES

FRANCIS I *by Jehanne d'Orliac* (LIPPINCOTT. $3.50)

"We have lost that . . . conviction of grandeur which gave full value to those magnificent lives, lives which we can understand, if at all, only by making an effort." How true this is one realizes in reading this life of Francis I, Prince of the Renaissance and *le roi chevalier*. Typical of his century and the embodiment of the faults and glowing beauties of the Renaissance, Francis is shown as the central figure in a rich tapestry. Louise of Savoy, his mother, fills a large part of the picture, and that proud, ambitious, dominant woman is here a living person. Indeed, "to understand Francis fully, we must know his mother. She moulded him". The tapestry unrolls, and we see the gay childhood; the exuberant young manhood, filled with hunting, fighting and loving; Marignano, the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the battle of Pavia; and that illustrious court which included Benvenuto Cellini and Leonardo da Vinci. Francis is interpreted through his heritage, and through his lifelong rivalry with Henry VIII of England and the emperor Charles V. And always there is the strong feminine influence over his life. Besides Claude and Eleonora of Portugal, the wives who counted for so little, and besides his attachments to his mother and his remarkable sister, Marguerite of Navarre, there were his mistresses, the Comtesse of Châteaubriant and the powerful Duchesse d'Etampes, as moulding forces. But the greatest passion of all was excitement, his constant mistress. In the wooing of this dearest love to whom he was strangely faithful there is always the sense of movement—the fascination of new horizons and of change.

The author has made us feel Francis's buoyant energy and his splendour. She is perhaps too kind to his irresolution and his weakness. But we have here a rich and colourful story, though too often extravagant in its style. Yet it is a vivid picture of those magnificent days and of that glamorous figure who still seems so alive.

ELIZABETH STEAD TABER

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WILLIAM BYRD OF WESTOVER *by Richmond Croom Beatty* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $3.00)

THE history of the distinguished Byrds of Virginia began in this country with the arrival from London of a lad of eighteen, sent for by his childless Uncle Stagg to inherit some eighteen hundred acres of tobacco-bearing land at the falls of the James River and the start of a prosperous fur-trade with the Indians. William Byrd II, with whom this book is concerned, was born just before the troubles which precipitated Bacon's Rebellion, and lived almost to the time of the French wars. His life thus falls in a comparatively quiet period; Virginia was entrenching itself, making what efforts it could in the face of England's short-sighted colonial policy to establish a civilization in the woods. The boy was educated in England, called to the bar, and had launched a promising career as English agent for the colony when his father's death called him back to an inheritance of twenty-six thousand acres. He had no taste for trade, and very little for life in Virginia. He was formed to the ideal of the eighteenth-century gentleman, an amateur of letters, science, divinity, the drama, the fine arts. Yet he assumed the burden, established a family, built an enduring house, took an active part in colonial affairs, wrote for his own pleasure. He had as much grief as joy in the hundred and seventy-nine thousand acres of which he died possessed, but in his blind land-greed he was as typical of his contemporaries as in his intellectual life he surpassed them. Mr. Beatty's book is a valuable commentary on the early Virginia squirearchy, a salutary counterpoise to the romantic "Old Virginia" tradition.

RUTH JANET BARBER

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# THE NEW NOVELS

It is probably going too far to say that every Scot who turns his hand to a novel brings forth a fascinating book, but the Scotch fiction that finds its way to America makes extraordinarily good reading. The Scotch are born with the breath of controversy in their nostrils; they are both analytical and passionate, and when imagination is added to their equipment they become the best tale-tellers in the world. A certain note of intellectual melodrama creeps into the soberest of their books, a melodrama that could never have been nourished in the softer country to the south. Centuries of the starkest theological doctrine known to man have left their impress, and when a Scotch writer decides to induce a sense of inevitability and fate in his readers he can do it with blood-curdling thoroughness, even though he may have abandoned his belief in the God of election and damnation for a belief in something only slightly higher in the intellectual scale than the "chemisms" of Mr. Dreiser.

For it is a sad fact, only too easily verified, that the younger Scotch lights have given up theological predestinarianism in favour of the brand provided by Herr Doktor Freud. There was more than a trace of the explanation by psychoanalysis in Mr. Edwin Muir's *The Three Brothers*. In Agnes Muir Mackenzie's *Keith of Kinellan* Freudianism and sound Catholic doctrine lay down together like the lion and the lamb, and again literary Freudianism mars Willa Muir's excellent first novel, *Imagined Corners* (Century. $2.00). The pity is all the greater in that Mrs. Muir has not the slightest need for this synthetic insight into human nature. If by the grace of God she might have lived and written fifty years earlier her book would have been artistically better, far more poignant and we should have been spared wincing at such sentences as "The crimes one imputes to others are usually crimes of which one has a secret and often unsuspected knowledge . . . That clear-eyed tranquil *something* in the core of personality might be a comparatively recent human development. . . . The sexual instinct has such complicated emotional effects on men and women that it masquerade as a simple appetite ought not to be condoned. Mankind has an inkling of this fact, and much ingenuity is applied to shielding the young and inexperienced from the bewildering effect of sex"—sentences which have as much place in a work of art as a table of logarithms.

Mrs. Muir's story of the little town of Calderwick and the far-reaching, quite unconscious effect Elizabeth Ramsay has on it when she comes to live there as the bride of the amorous, mischievous scapegrace, Hector Shand, is a good story on any terms, and the reappearance of Hector's cosmopolitan half sister, revisiting Calderwick after twenty years' voluntary exile gives Mrs. Muir the artist full scope for drama and contrast. But Mrs. Muir the psychologist is always—or almost always—there, bumping into her story, suspending her characters in mid-air to explain them, wiping out contrasts under the dazzling illumination cast by her theori-



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Poor, mad Ned would have been just as mad and twice as pathetic if we had not had to know that his trouble was a flawed ego; our grandmothers could have been trusted to know without being told that Mabel's hostility to her brother-in-law was the obverse of her attraction to him; scamps were scamps, and infinitely more interesting to read about, long before they were examples of mother-fixations and narcissism.

Good as the book is, it will not last a moment after the noise of Freud's hot-gospelling dies away. Mrs. Muir is the victim of her period.

Georgette Carneal's *The Great Day* (Liveright. $2.50) has had a great claque; it has been called powerful, impressive, moving, masterly, although to be fair to its reviewers they have usually added that this is in spite of clumsiness and sentimentality. It has been called almost everything except a bad book. It is a bad book.

The great day to which all Miss Carneal's characters look forward in some manner or other is the day on which they may cease prostituting themselves, figuratively or literally, and turn to honest, healthy living. The barrier to decency, in every case, is poverty.

The lives of the characters radiate from—or perhaps "congeal around" would be a fitter figure—the offices of a great tabloid, easily identifiable by every New Yorker. Miss Carneal knows her tabloids; in fact, *The Great Day* is a signal instance of base ingratitude. Where but in the tabloids' offices could one learn to cover slimy sensationalism with high moral attitudes? And where, if that lesson had gone unlearned, would *The Great Day* be?

The hero is a poor stick, not nearly corrupt enough to carry his honours as the central character, only as much of a bootlicker as he needs to be to stay in the book; the heroine (God save the mark!) after being unjustly discharged from the paper, sells her beautiful body to an elderly pervert. The perversion is never specifically indicated, but you are assured it is very horrifying. The heroine's soul, of course, remains practically untouched.

Well, the hero and the heroine meet, and confess, and agonize, and will marry despite the devil. But the heroine, her character sapped by the love of money (and nothing else), must go back to her loathsome duties for one last time, since the reward is to be a fabulous check. But the demands made on that last night are too much for even our leprous lady, and she creeps away, soiled, broken, utterly destroyed, and lets her motor run in a closed garage. . . .

At the moment of writing this review Miss Carneal has a suit on against the publishers of Walter Winchell, who rashly said that Helen Woodward had rewritten *The Great Day*. There would indeed seem to be grounds for a suit in Mr. Winchell's charge, but I should think it was Mrs. Woodward's rather than Miss Carneal's. In case Mrs. Woodward has overlooked it, let me call her attention to the bottom of p. 140 *et seq.*: "Wherever she looked, the faces were vacant, the bodies loose. To these people it represented one of those spells of thinkless animal abandon that, in the case of dull little people just as in the case of those who think and feel, the blood cries out for and takes its own answer; it is only the manner that is different".

In *That Was Yesterday* (Knopf. $2.50) Storm Jameson reworks in maturity material that she used in *The Pitiful Wife* and, to some extent, in *Three Kingdoms*. It is difficult to say whether those who are meeting Miss Jameson's novels for the first time or

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those who are reading this book against the background of her earlier work will find the novel more interesting. This latest record of a woman caught in an unhappy marriage, trying valiantly to make the marriage succeed, and at last leaving it before it has quite vanquished her, is better than the others, more detached, more humorous, less blurred by the overtone that is present in both *The Pitiful Wife* and *Three Kingdoms*, a tone that sounded most uncomfortably like self-pity by reason of Miss Jameson's complete identification of herself with her earlier heroines.

Interesting as the book is, I confess I am ready now to learn that Storm Jameson's harp has another string; the more so since it becomes apparent in this novel that even her recent trilogy was the family background of this book's "Hervey Russell". But I would rather go on reading the same story retold to infinity than have no more of Storm Jameson's work.

*Small Town* (*Appleton*. $2.00) by Bradda Field, is the painful story of a few months in the lives of three sisters in a Canadian town, during which Ariadne, the youngest by twenty years, tries with all her limited resources to avoid the dull spinsterhood that has overtaken her sisters. After its fashion it is a Canadian *Alice Adams*, but Miss Field is far more relentless than Mr. Tarkington could ever have brought himself to be: no symbolic sunlight shines on her nineteen-year-old heroine from the last page, but light through the crack of a hotel door, silhouetting the gross salesman who represents Ariadne's one success. Before she has been brought to that pass, Ariadne's author has had her make every error of judgment, undergo every humiliation that her restricted field would allow. The book is well planned, the characters—as sickening a group as was ever bound into a book—are convincing, and the descent of Ariadne from her small Ontario town to the Avernus of West Seventy-second Street is fully as dreadful as it was meant to be. Yet the author's pointless malice towards her pitiful little heroine, never absent from the first page to the last, spoils what might have been an excellent novel of its kind. The child, on Miss Field's own showing, was only doing for herself, in a field where civilized conduct is anything but second nature, what should have been done for her, and the tone of adolescent spite in which Ariadne's blunders are recounted ("A girl certainly didn't crave food when she was poised to spring to life's climax", as an example of the note) is a far graver fault than a mere blemish of handling.

*The Siege of Pleasure* (Little, Brown. $2.00) by Patrick Hamilton, is another story of a young girl's downfall, well written but just one more version, and not an exceptionally moving one, of the same old tale. Each generation of writers will be forever moved by the poignance of "She was young and poor; she longed for pleasure; and she fell" but it has been done, and done again, and well done over and over, and as a theme it might well rest for fifty years. This book is the story of one of the secondary characters in Mr. Hamilton's earlier and genuinely moving book, *The Temple Bell.*

Alec Waugh's *That American Woman* (Farrar & Rinehart. $2.00) is recommended to all who like their humour unintentional. It is very, very funny, and never funnier than when it is being most wistful; and wistfulness wreathes its gossamer web over every page. Its hero is a young writer of novels and if you are not bright enough to guess

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the original of the young writer you are too dull to read Mr. Waugh—and its heroine (that American woman), who never has less than a brace of ill-assorted lovers and one husband at any moment, is, one suspects, as close as Mr. Waugh could come to the famous Lady Brett. And what shall we say of that gay, brave little soul who pops into bed with the young writer whenever he passes through London though she knows he does not really love her, and who chivalrously marries another when she realizes that she may cramp the young writer's style? Or that other no less brave little soul, also mowed down by the auctorial charm, who so gallantly goes off to Hollywood without him? And the cocktail parties, and the penthouses, and the Rivieras, and the literary gossip! And, as if this were not God's plenty, there is that little purist's mannerism of Mr. Waugh's, which occasionally piles up with such effect, the use of " 'ld" where the less conscientious would use " 'd", as, *exempli gratia*, on p. 194: " 'You'll be good to me,' she said. 'You'ld be all I'ld have.' "

DOROTHEA BRANDE

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TOWARDS A BETTER LIFE *by Kenneth Burke* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

LATE in 1931 occurred an event that I believe will be accounted one of the surviving assets of that too insolvent year—the publication of Mr. Burke's *Counter-Statement*. The book was more than a rehabilitation of rhetoric; it was a restatement of its nature in terms that could win the respect of modern minds. The shift from a craft problem to a psychological problem was masterly, and as revealing in its way as the shift of history from the battlefield to the market.

Mr. Burke's new book may be taken to be a working out of the principles projected in *Counter-Statement*, but it is to be remembered that it is a single experiment and that it would be futile to judge either of the two books by the other; to say, for instance, that the principles in *Counter-Statement* are invalidated by the failure to apply them in *Towards a Better Life*, or that the latter work is a failure because it does not fulfil those principles to the letter.

In his preface to *Towards a Better Life*, Mr. Burke sets down an epitomized counter-statement. He tells us that "Lamentation, rejoicing, beseechment, admonition, sayings and invective—these seemed to me central matters while a plot in which they might occur seemed peripheral, little more than a pretext, justifiable not as "a good story" but only in so far as it could bring these six characteristics to the fore. These mark, these six mark, in a heightened manner, the significant features of each day in our secular yet somewhat biblical, lives—and what I most wanted to do was to lament, rejoice, beseech, admonish, aphorize and inveigh".

Thus, it will be seen that Mr. Burke takes the exactly opposite position of the modern realistic novelist. Realism assumes that given the events, the emotions will follow. Mr. Burke assumes that given the emotions the events will follow in retrospect, or will not be required. Each expects too much from the reader. The emotions stirred in the reader by the realistic novel are as crude and unformed as those stirred in him by the events in his own life. They are not guided by the writer since he fails to provide the necessary eloquent expressions for them, into the splendid and heightened forms that are the majestic achievements of our greatest literature. Mr. Burke, on the other hand, pro-

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vides the reader the expressions without material to apply them. For almost half the book eloquence drains out for lack of a vessel. In the later half of the book, merely because the story has taken form, the lamentations and the rejoicings resound; the beseechings and the admonitions disquiet us; and the sayings and invectives have point.

The outstanding essay in *Counter-Statement* was *Psychology and Form.* In it Mr. Burke brilliantly analyzed the ghost scene in *Hamlet,* showing what a command Shakespeare had upon the psychology of the audience, how by the arrangement of the incidents of the plot he prepared his audience for the full outburst of his rhetoric. In other words, then, the writer who makes a fiction must have invention equal to his expression. Without it, he is handicapped in the same way as a philosopher who would argue by conclusions alone without the reasons. Mr. Burke practically admits this in his preface when, in making a plea for a plotless novel, he admits that he is justifying his defects as a novelist. Yet by the book's evidence we can only conclude that Mr. Burke is a completer novelist than he realizes.

The book itself, as I have intimated, contains the novelist as well as the anti-novelist. We realize at the end that it has plot enough for a trilogy. And in the second half the plot, becoming formed, imparts a sudden power to the book. We are moved; we become obsessed like its heroic Schlemiel with the strength of his deliberate sufferings. Mr. Burke succeeds in making a pathology realistic.

*Towards a Better Life* takes its place among the major literary experiments of our time and Mr. Burke is certain to give a new direction to his contemporaries. It may be, as he says, that "What I have learned through being in grave extremities, some one, coming after me, will handle with ease". This perhaps will not be true only because Mr. Burke will have made the task easier for his successor, but because he has made the task harder for himself by a somewhat stilted style. It lacks sensuousness above all. Its beauties are those of the agile mind; its excitements are the pleasures of alert and keen perceptions. Its very vocabulary seems to me the vocabulary of dialectics and inhibitory to the sensual. Its rhythms I found harsh, counter-cutting frequently rather than counter-pointing. Its formalism was in some instances grotesque rather than stately. Often I had the feeling that I was reading a translation, the effect of the book being so often alien to the fluency that is, I believe, one of the most general characteristics of English literature. The larger movements, however, are beautifully handled and give the exhilarating effect to the memory of tremendous upheavals and ebbs.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

## CHAOS IS COME AGAIN *by Claude Houghton* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

TWENTY years ago this book would have been called "The Girl at Greystones" and would have been a more integrated if not better novel, for, in spite of the impersonal and prophetic title which would lead one to suspect a work in the A. Huxley tenor, in spite of the gloomy discussions and prognostications which fill certain chapters, and the viciously-intended satire which occupies others the essential props of the drama remain the familiar neglected ancestral mansion with its quaint antedated inhabitants and radiant whimsical, ethereal Girl discovered in the overgrown garden. You will remember the artless way in which she engages the intruder in conversation, the discovery after half a

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hour that they do not know each other's name, the whiteness of her expressive throat, the mysterious terror which overcasts her elfish existence, the hero's doglike and passionate conviction that he is utterly unworthy of her. It is all there in modern dress.

The romance begins with Vernon Dexter's arrival, in the rôle of adventure-seeking tutor, at Greystones, and ends with his marrying the Girl. Greystones is the ancestral seat of the Petersleys; Sir Keith, the head of the house, lets it go to rack and ruin. In Sir Keith are united the better qualities of the English gentleman, the artist, and a dash of the soldier of fortune. His eldest son Adrian is an even more admirable creation for he qualifies as a mind-reader and has a "touch of genius" as an architect. There are other romantic personalities and there is, of course, the Girl.

Then suddenly, when the romance is well under way, these characters whose attractiveness is only equalled by their mystery jump head foremost into reality and modern life, land upside down and become symbols. Another story begins. Mr. Houghton has briefly sketched a few characters to represent various aspects of modern life. He then dismisses modern literature by dividing it into three classes—the dull and unimportant; the Queer school, consisting of affectations and exhibitions; and the Beer school, stale and heavy-handed attempts at Rabelais. In this connection should be noted the significance of the cloud overcasting the Girl's life. She is physically enslaved to one of the savage successful business men; her spirit despises him and her body craves him. That she marries the tutor who personifies kindness, understanding and, presumably, spirituality, is Mr. Houghton's rebuke to those writers who announce that Phallus is the bridge to modern salvation.

*Chaos is Come Again* is sadly inadequate as a discussion of modern life. Its author reveals more talent for light, sentimental and slightly ironic writing than for the Promethean challenge. He is frequently and successfully epigrammatic and his satire, which falls far short of cosmic significance and of any vital reality, is, nevertheless entertaining. However one may respect the urge in a writer to take upon himself the spiritual problems of a people, one must regret his action when recognizing that, far from lifting or being crushed by the burden, he has not even succeeded in getting it upon his back.

JOHN BRONSON

I, JAMES LEWIS *by Gilbert W. Gabriel* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

FROM a few documents and obscure chronicles of the beginning of the last century Mr. Gabriel gleaned the hint of a demonic act accomplished by an obscure ex-school teacher, James Lewis, head clerk for John Jacob Astor in the pioneer venture of establishing the fur-trading posts of the Pacific Northwest. About that deed and the figure of James Lewis, Mr. Gabriel has written a story which, although given over to adventure's blood, thunder and moonlight, at times comes very close to attaining the quality of literature.

In violation of all the rules for the romantic reconstruction of the pioneer past, James Lewis is portrayed as a nervous, imaginative, ridiculous scholar who, after intense humiliation, pledges himself to the devil in the form of Mammon. That is still a sufficiently sensational theme but it has been originally developed. Lewis is not picturesquely diabolic: he triumphantly satisfies nasty little passions; he rises to anger, wavers and doubts. A screaming masochist and coward, he is also brave, sometimes heroic and always philosophic.

The author's style is as vivid as his subject. Impressions jerk past with a sort of hysterical

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velocity. Frequently one would wish to hesitate over the savour of some particular metaphor or description, but the succession of ideas is too rapid, the features of events too swollen with impending dramas to permit of careful and reflective reading. What relegates this novel to the adventure shelves in spite of its merits is the author's failure to graduate the dynamics of his events proportionally—an absence of the intellectual restraint necessary to the creation of any extensive work of art.

JOHN BRONSON

THE DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN *by Henry Williamson* (DUTTON. $2.50)

THIS, the publisher's note informs us, is a complete re-writing of Mr. Williamson's first novel, and constitutes the third volume of his tetralogy, *The Flax of Dream*. More than a mere revision of the earlier edition, it is written from a different standpoint and reaches different conclusions.

Certainly Mr. Williamson has made an interesting experiment—one similar to that made by Somerset Maugham with *Mrs. Craddock*. The result, however, does not seem to justify the undertaking. The story of young Willie Maddison's unfortunate romance, complicated by his ever-present sense of the injustice of life, is somewhat overloaded with description of the wild life of Devonshire, and Willie and his acquaintances remain a group of disoriented, futile young antinomians. The post-adolescent intensity is tainted by the same subconscious pathological disturbances we find among the characters of the late D. H. Lawrence, without being nearly so convincing. Often they give the irritating impression of being engrossed in rôles beyond their years. Perhaps Evelyn is a believable character, but there can scarcely be any argument concerning the utter impossibility of her five-year-old daughter Jonquil, alias Quillie, who constantly speaks of herself in the third person, bosses her elders, and converses with them in a way to remind one of Dickens.

It cannot be denied that the pursuit of the puzzling and beautiful Evelyn by a round half-dozen young men, and her tolerant husband's attempt to hold her, have considerable dramatic value; and only the most obtuse will fail to be impressed by the richness, sweetness, and variety of Mr. Williamson's style, the charm of his pictures of the racy country folk, and his sympathetic notice of growing and living things. For what is in it, the novel is often delightful. It is only as a novel by an admittedly fine writer that it is disappointing.

ROBERT MOLLOY

UNCLAY *by T. F. Powys* (VIKING. $2.50)

DEATH on a holiday in Dorset in a suicide's suit and with T. F. Powys to take him the rounds of the village with the village idiot on one hand and the village atheist on the other, is an engaging theme. The simple explanation suffices that Gabriel's command to "unclay" two of the villagers has been lost. Death takes for a time to mowing hay instead of flesh and discovers unexpectedly life in progress instead of in dissolution. What that life is, underneath the legend of rustic simplicity, more than one Powys has revealed. "Country people like oddities; there would be no pleasure for them if all their neighbours were ordinary. . . . To drop a baby, so that its nose is flattened is an amusing pastime: when the child grows it will be a subject for laughter. . . ." No one then is surprised—everyone is pleased, as from a windfall—at Sarah's fancying herself a camel for reasons of original sin, or at the carrier who marries her because he has always fancied animals. Charming oddities there are

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too, as the curate Hayhoe, who is the Vicar of Wakefield done over by Jane Austen. In this good company John Death becomes human; after the village wanton and the village *enfant terrible*, he falls in love with the woman he has been sent to "unclay". He saves her from the village libertine, but only by resuming his deadly state, and with her dies the true and simple lover. The fantastic revels of these village types indigenous to Dorset turn into a jolly, bawdy, kindly morality play in the plastic hands of Mr. Powys: their eccentricities are parochial but their essence is universal. A slight craziness in the whole thing tilts the story into our affections; that, and a heavenly style like vintage port.

PETER MUNRO JACK

UNDER THE BRUTCHSTONE *by J. M. Denwood and S. Fowler Wright.* (COWARD-MCCANN. $2.50)

THE author of this book was a poacher but, like his hero Red Ike, he seems to have had an honest hankering after the finer things of life as expressed by and in great literature. So Red Ike is not only a poacher, but a poet as well and a "great soul". *Under the Brutchstone* is a strange medley of honest observation and melodramatic incident. Every stock character of the old blood-and-thunder stage is present, and every stock situation is exploited in the exact manner of the ten-twenty-thirty. There are murders, free-for-alls, drinking bouts and plotting. There are the fiendish squire and his gipsy henchman; the lecherous land-owner and the ruined girl. There are the rough diamond, Red Ike, and his good-hearted but wayward companions. Virtue, as implicit under the cloak of men who, though outlaws, are pure of heart, triumphs in the end and villainy reaps its just reward.

It is astounding how these people are inevitably within earshot of crucial conversations, and pop out of bracken-bushes in time to frustrate the nefarious schemes of their enemies. The self-restraint of hot-blooded men in the presence of pure but desirable womanhood is incredible, and were the novel not in deadly earnest it could be read with intense amusement as an hilarious burlesque.

ALVAH C. BESSIE

DEEP STREETS *by Benedict Thielen* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $2.00)

THE chapters of *Deep Streets* form a relay of short stories, the characters in each starting off after a contact more directive than the touch of a passing hand. The participants perform without a halt, although backed by unequal coaching; particularly the spectator feels that the professor, forced to run last as well as first, has been "fixed", struck blind at the finishing line by his coach: in the midst of adroit recapitulation of all preceding chapters, the professor reappears as the bland word-monger who sees only superficially the life about him in the deep streets of New York.

Things begin to happen when the professor, through with his morning exercises and ready to write a lushly didactic magazine column, gives his maid a five-dollar bill because it is her birthday and early spring. Katy buys a red hat which attracts the eyes of George, a shoe salesman she mistakes for an actor; the story that follows has a tragic twist. George, escaping from the dénouement, steals a brief-case, believing it to contain bonds. It contains a first novel by Richard Trent: his attempt to escape from Wall Street. As a result of the theft Mary will not marry Richard. Of the six remaining stories only one measures up to those devoted to Katy

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and George. That one concerns a Negro, Walter, who, shaken by the war, becomes obtrusively eccentric at the sight of Mary's white prettiness in Harlem.

The publishers say that Mr. Thielen wrote his book "in revolt against the standard one-main-character novel". Mr. Thielen does succeed in shaping the old convention that bound short stories together with a single thread anew. He uses Chance as his thread. The results show a knowledge of good writing, a real gift for characteristic dialogue, and a wide understanding of people—excepting the twentieth-century pedagogue.

CYRILLY ABELS

THE WHITE GODS *by Richard Friedenthal* (HARPERS. $3.50)

IN the form of a novel this book, a translation from the German, tells the story of Cortez's departure from Havana, his conquest of the Mexican Empire and his return to Spain. It is a romance which would seem incredible if we did not know it to be historical fact. The little handful of Spaniards, their sufferings, their extraordinary endurance, their defeat of an enemy which outnumbered them many times, the astounding behaviour of the Mexican king, Montezuma, are truths which read like legends, while the descriptions of the magnificent palaces in the beautiful city on the lake seem like pages from some fairy-tale. But that splendid Mexican Empire had its dark side, for its religion demanded the sacrifice of human beings to the gods—by hundreds and thousands—so that their altars were so many shambles. The Spaniards professed themselves horrified, but after reading the author's account of their behaviour one feels that there was little to choose between them and the Indians so far as cruelty was concerned, and their greed, moreover, was insatiable. It was the abundant store of gold adorning the nobles' persons and their palaces which brought about the destruction of the Mexican Empire, but that same gold proved a curse to the Spaniards also. Some of them it drowned in the mud and slime on the famous "Tragic Night"; on some of them, its baleful influence was not exerted until they were back in Spain. The book is carefully and fully, rather too fully, detailed, the result, it would seem, of a great deal of conscientious research. Amid the general cruelty, lust and greed, the noble figure of the great priest, Las Casas, stands out in splendid relief.

LOUISE MAUNSELL FIELD

GAMBLER'S WIFE *by Elizabeth Gertrude Stern* (MACMILLAN. $2.50)

JUDITH is a daughter of the Ozarks. Her father and mother are poor, but staunch believers and firm Puritans. From them Judy gets the straightness of character that stays by her all her life. Orphaned when she is still young, she goes to work in a hotel in one of the get-rich-quick cities of Oklahoma, where she falls in love with a fascinating and well-travelled man, who, however, after their marriage and flight to Galveston, turns out to be not only a gambler but a cheat. He uses Judy's good looks as a lure with which to attract youthful players. Discovered in his deception, the rascal deserts his young wife while she is pregnant. Disillusioned but undiscouraged, Judy bears the child and then, by slow patient industry, makes a decent home for it.

This is only half the story of *Gambler's Wife*. The rest describes the return of Judy's husband years after his desertion, his renewed mischief, the birth of a second child,

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and the fate of this child and of the first. The tale that began in Arkansas in the eighties ends among the skyscrapers of modern New York. Judy's children are assailed by various contemporary evils and problems, but she herself is as firm, silent, and dependable as ever.

The novel is no better than it appears above. After the first few chapters, where the pastoral Ozarks are pleasantly called up and the style is agreeably painstaking, it lapses into a dull chronicle of a woman and her troubles, unrelieved by humour, insight, or good writing. The author's talent, like Fannie Hurst's, is for suggesting in a short novel a long and troubled life. In this vein she is fairly successful, and will probably live, despite this review, to make a great many readers delightfully unhappy.

FREDERICK DUPEE

BRIGHT SKIN *by Julia Peterkin* (BOBBS-MERRILL. $2.50)

WHEN Blue's father took him away from his faithless mother and left him with Cun Fred and Aun Fan, his grandparents at the Blue Brook plantation, he saw his cousin Cricket and was amazed. "All the women and girls he knew were black and had short kinky hair wrapped into tight cords with ball thread. This child's skin was the colour of a ripe gourd and her hair hung in a tousled black mass clear to her shoulders." And from the beginning he was hers to do with as she desired.

She was a "bright skin" whose father had been a white man. Some of the Negroes agreed with Cun Jule who said, "A bright skin ain' got no place in dis world". But it never made any difference to Blue, or Man Jay, or Cricket's Uncle Wes, or Big Pa. Eventually she heard of far-away cities where other bright skins were never slighted because of their mixe
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all you do and he knows what you sa
think. He punishes the wicked and sup
the good, and his voice speaks in the thun
(At the same time, there are the myster
of cunjure presided over by Big Pa who w
born in Africa.) Under the stress of emo
tional meetings adolescent children are sent off by themselves to seek God. Their visions, if acceptable to the assembled deacons, admit them to Heaven's Gate church membership. No more dancing or crossing their feet. They and all other good people must resist the temptations of dancing, drinking, and the singing of reel-songs. Here are the dilapidated cabins, the deserted, awful splendour of the white folks' Big House, the no-manners field-hands of the Quarters, the hogs, the boll weevils and the fields of cotton. And thus, with faithfully sustained and sustaining detail the depicting of a community comes to be the dominant factor of the book.

This isolated world, for most of us necessarily exotic, has authentic beauty and more

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Mrs. Peterkin's sim- ith perfect art a sub- complication. But iar with her previous *Black April* and *Scarlet* same subject and are not etails may vary, but the . And it happens to be an nce which is expressed in gy and incident. Moreover, nicely individualized within , are to some extent repeated nt names in each subsequent istance, Blue in *Bright Skin* and *Black April* might be the same

of starting out to write a tetralogy *rsyte Saga* and setting up a time se- genealogies and the devices of that work, Mrs. Peterkin has begun anew each book. She has apparently thought a different plot and some variation of aracter would constitute another novel. For me writers this would be true, but not for er. The graphic incident is the brick of her novel-building. And there seems to be a natural limit to significant character variation among her simple people. Either that, or she as a white woman is not able to delve deeply into the secret places of another race.

Mrs. Peterkin has written four volumes, but they are only one novel. She must now decide whether to start a new novel or add another volume to her already masterful creation of Negro life. In the latter case she must remember that her stage is fully set. The heroic figure of April begging to be buried "in a man-size box" though his legs have been amputated, and the marvellous, ever-sinning Sl' May'e lend to their stories a crowning quality which is lacking in *Bright Skin*. For in the end Cricket has eluded us; she has gone where the author cannot follow, and her going confirms our suspicion that we have learned little which was not said in the earlier volumes. Luckily the stuff of Mrs. Peterkin's novels bears repeating uncommonly well.

ARCHER WINSTEN

JOB *by Joseph Roth* (VIKING. $2.50)

THIS is a story of faith. Mendel Singer, the hero of *Job*, is "pious, God-fearing and ordinary, an entirely commonplace Jew". But the Biblical parallelism is not sustained, for his simple belief fails under the weight of his tribulations, and Mendel Singer is even less Job in character than in circumstances.

His youngest child is a crippled, dumb epileptic. Russian officers who come to vaccinate would take him away into a hospital to cure him. Mendel, out of his faith, refuses. There are no cures without God's will. The rabbi has said "Do not leave your son, even if he is a great burden to you. He will be well after many years". For a long time Mendel tries to understand and to help the idiot child. Ringing on a glass with a spoon, he catches its attention, and tries to make it repeat "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". Then the welfare of the family makes it necessary to follow an older son to America, leaving the child in the care of neighbours. There is no choice.

Mendel and his wife are already alienated. The eldest son has been conscripted and the beautiful daughter has become a wanton. In America there is a period of material security, but both sons are lost in the World War, the mother dies of grief, and the daughter kills herself. Alone, dazed with sorrow and dependent on charity, Mendel Singer curses God. While he waits for death with cold endurance, the miracle has happened. The crippled son, cured, has become a great composer

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MIDSUMMER NIGHT MADNESS *by Seán O'Faoláin* (VIKING. $2.50)

THE most astonishing thing about these seven stories is the style. All concern the Ireland of the time of guerrilla warfare and reprisals and the reader more or less expects a manner like that of Faulkner or Hemingway or Dos Passos or, to get nearer home, Liam O'Flaherty. Instead, he will find a leisurely, lingering prose of remarkable beauty in both rhythm and colour, and a narrative which proceeds with the unruffled grace and ease of a swan moving over the glassy surface of a pool. The style, however, is not merely pretty, nor does it become sluggish. It is quite equal to the demands of the subject matter, and its flexibility wins you to its even pace.

The stories vary in merit. *Midsummer Night Madness,* like a condensed *Wuthering Heights* in atmosphere, is by far the best, because it is superlatively good and not because the others are poor. When an author has written a tale of night in the country, a ruined manor house, an old and broken Irish Don Juan, a fire set by rebel soldiers, a dark, beautiful girl who is the old man's last mistress—and when he has written it in such a way as to do entire justice to his material—he is not likely to surpass it in a hurry. However, *The Small Lady* would grace any collection of stories. The kidnapping and murder of Mrs. Sydney Browne who betrayed the guerrillas is the subject. In the monastery where she is taken for the night, she tempts young Denis, the soldier who has been detailed to guard her. It is Denis's first offence against chastity; he confesses his sin and receives communion, and later goes his way, as related in *Fugue,* a story of two men's flight.

*The Bombshop,* O'Faoláin's first published story, and *The Death of Stevey Long* tell first of the desertion of the house where bombs are made, and then of Long's flight from prison, and arrest after he unwittingly makes his way into the doomed place. A grim humorous touch here and there aids both stories. *The Patriot* is about a courtship during the rebellion. It is beautifully written but unimportant in comparison with the preceding stories. *Lilliput* is a mere sketch of a family living in a cart in an Irish city, presumably Cork. It succeeds to a moderate degree.

The beauty and desolation of the Irish country-side, the atmosphere of tension and doubt and patriotism, the delightful episodes, and the superb writing make this collection of stories a memorable one. To read it for the first time is a privilege of the rarest sort. Edward Garnett has provided a pleasant introduction in which he gives his opinions about the author and the main facts about his career.

ROBERT MOLLOY

PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS *by Pál Szabó* (LITTLE, BROWN. $2.00)

THE lines along which this novel of Hungarian peasant life is constructed are too familiar to produce any violent indrawing of breath, but within its limits it provides interest and amusement. The book does not go very deep and its construction is not of the most skilful. Bertalan Barna's affair with the postmaster's wife, his attempts to educate himself, his love for the miller's beautiful eldest daughter, her marriage to the steward of the manor during his absence, Bertalan's return and marriage to the younger daughter—this simple tale is hung with a variety of local colour. There is a patriotic festival, a funeral, a fine scene with the pompous lord of the manor; and there are other episodes of the sort, not all of which are essential to the progress of the tale. Those on whom the war

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is beginning to pall will not care for a full third of the book. The characters are not particularly fresh and the comic ones are too rich and heavily accented to be entirely convincing. On the other hand, the humour is good and the style is excellent. One judges that the translation was made with a great deal of care. The atmosphere is convincing and the telling of separate parts of the story has directness and vigour, while a certain sincerity does much to make the novel ingratiating. The reader who does not expect another *Good Earth* or *Peasants* will enjoy it.

ROBERT MOLLOY

THE DEVIL IN THE FLESH *by R. Radiguet* (HARRISON SMITH. $2.50)

RAYMOND RADIGUET'S life lasted not much longer than Chatterton's. The fact predisposes one to go to his work as *curiosa,* but a reading of it proves that it may be judged by higher standards. It is a favourite device of reviewers to compare certain books to etchings, and, if none of the staleness of the figure will attach to the novel, we might say that *The Devil in the Flesh* is like an expert dry-point; there is the same economy without any fashionable "starkness", the same intimacy of work done with speed that comes from decision rather than slovenly haste, and the same quickening of the imagination. It is that decision, the complete lack of adolescent groping, which is the chiefest of Radiguet's talents; and, though the sureness of his strokes is aided by the cruelty of adolescent egoism, it is to his credit that he progresses beyond this partial insensitivity and never uses it to obtain a *frisson noveau.* The book is mature, but it could have been written by no one but a prodigy. This is not to contradict the statement that the novel may be judged aside from its creator's years: it means that we get all the vividness of a tale by one who, in its very center, still could see the wood for all the trees.

The book has been called classic, and, if we take classic to mean a quality of restraint and a concern with the central, then this story of the adulterous love of a sixteen-year old boy and a girl of nineteen deserves the description. Precocious sex experience is rare enough to make it a sensational theme for literature, yet Radiguet—dealing with a prodigy who, like most brilliant children, combines sharpness of intellect with an uncertainty of emotion and a solipsistic attitude that would be neurotic in an adult—soon penetrates to the abiding aspects of love, and the beauty and sanity of his work lie in the clarity with which he reveals the growth of love, jealousy and a sense of responsibility in the boy's mind. The tale is moving because here first love—under exceptional circumstances, it is true—is shown as more than a ripple on a pool of shallow emotions; it is the chief means of proving that the pool is deep and cannot be explored without danger. And the mature and masculine nature of the book issues from the implicit affirmation that this danger, however fearsome, must not be shirked if life is to be more than a skimming of surfaces. If these words bear a dull weightiness of tone, they do not reflect the light expertness and the fresh charm of experience first encountered which this unusual novel holds.

GEOFFREY STONE

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(*Continued from page 82*)

by Another Hand" are corrective. For example, the first edition of *Tarka the Otter* (1927), which was awarded the Hawthornden Prize, consists of a limited signed edition of 100 copies, vellum bound and on handmade paper, and 1,000 unsigned copies. In October of the same year there was a reimposition of the same type for another issue, which leads to the warning: "This crown octavo edition is, therefore, in no way a first edition, in spite of the bibliographical statement to be found in the many subsequent editions that *Tarka the Otter* was first published in October 1927." These "authentic annotations" also seem to have been inspired by Mr. Williamson, judging by a note to *The Dream of Fair Women*. From this it appears that at the request of Mr. Caradoc Evans, the author, five books were sent for the purpose of a critical appreciation which was to appear in a periodical. Each copy, also by request, bore an autograph inscription. "Nothing", adds the note, "has since been heard of the inscribed copies or of the critical appreciation." It seems to have been "the dream of a dark Welshman".

* * *

*Catalogue Humour*

Wanted:

Braddon: Lady Audley's Secret. 1st Edn.
Trollope: Can You Forgive Her? Do.

## *Books and MSS in the Sale-rooms*

The most discussed event in sale-room circles since my last notes has been the Lothian sale in New York. There has been a considerable amount of feeling over the decision to disperse such a collection elsewhere than in England; and the press has contained some pretty plain opinions of the Marquess of Lothian's action in having his treasures sold by the American Art Association-Anderson Galleries. The objections were that the business should have been kept in London, the acknowledged world's center for book-sales, and that the possibility of retaining some of the unique MSS and books in the country to which they historically belong was prejudiced by the sale's being held in New York. The second objection is the weaker; and is less impressive still when it is considered that one of the chief items in the sale was a copy (belonging to another library) of the famous "Olive Branch" Petition to George III signed by the leaders of the struggle for American Independence. This document—of which there are only two others—was sold for $53,000 to Mr. Gabriel Wells.

All the same, this unprecedented departure from normal custom—for this was the first old library of its importance to be sent to America for dispersal—was keenly felt; and there was much speculation as to the result, the general opinion being that the prices would be rather below those obtainable in London. They were, however, surprisingly high, particularly considering the financial difficulties of the times. The American Art Association-Anderson Galleries and Mr. Seymour de Ricci could hardly have done better justice to the description of the treasures; and American collectors and dealers did the rest. At this distance it seems to have been a united States' rally to do worthily by the great occasion; and it was successful. With individual prices like $61,000 for the *Tikytt Psalter*, a beautiful illuminated MS of *circa* 1310; $55,000 for the *Blickling Homilies*, a MS of A.D. 971; and $45,000 for a copy of the first book printed at Bruges, Boccaccio's *De la*



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*Ruine des Nobles hommes et femmes* (1476)—the total for the first evening's sale soared to the remarkable figure of £102,000 (counting, in this case, the dollar at current value), which is very near the record for one session of £110,356 obtained at Sotheby's in London during the course of the dispersal of the famous Britwell Court Library, the whole of which realized some £600,000. These Lothian prices in New York, nevertheless, have been acknowledged here as amazing. I do not give them in further detail because they will already have had sufficient attention in your press. It is enough to note their significance—not only as regards the unique event, but as showing the resources of American collectors and dealers notwithstanding the financial stringency of the times.

In London there has been no such excitement; but in some very ordinary sales, a few unusual items are worthy of note. At Hodgson's appeared a copy of the first edition of *The Haunch of Venison, a Poetical Epistle to Lord Clare. By the Late Dr. Goldsmith* (with portrait by Bunbury and half-title *Price One Shilling*: 1776). This fine tall copy was bound up with a first of Crabbe's *The Village* (1783) and twenty-three other poems in three volumes, the price realized being $390; once again illustrating the possibilities of bound-up items, which should always be closely watched. A large-paper copy of Bagster's 2nd edition of Walton and Cotton's *Compleat Angler* (1815), having a fore-edge painting of an angling scene and evidently Gosden's own copy bound for himself, brought $350. An extraordinarily fine copy of Moore's *Annals of Gallantry: or the Conjugal Monitor; being a Collection of Curious and Important Trials for Divorces*, three of the coloured plates signed by Cruikshank, in the original boards uncut (3 vols, 1814-15) made the excellent figure of $500. D. G Elliot's *Monograph of the Phasianidae, or*



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*Family of the Pheasants*, with its 77 chromo-litho and two plain plates (published in New York for the Author, 1872), sold for $140; and twenty dollars more secured a copy of Surtees's *Hawbuck Grange*, first edn, with Longman's 32-page catalogue dated October, 1847. A 1st of Captain Vancouver's *Voyage of Discovery round the World*, with the rare Atlas of Charts and Views (3 vols, 1798), reached $220. An early book of its kind was Byrd's *Songs of Sundrie Natures: some of Grauitie, and others of Myrth* (1589), bound up with other musical items in four vols, realized $190.

Coming to first editions of modern authors, a copy of Max Beerbohm's *Works*, with 8 leaves of adverts (1896), with (inserted) a caricature of the author by himself and an A.L.s., went at $200; one of Kipling's rare *Echoes: By Two Writers* (Lahore, 1884), at $250; one of Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls*, with leaf of adverts at end (1888) at $32; one of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, with green end-papers (1843), at $220; one of (de la Mare's) *Songs of Childhood* by Walter Ramal (1902), at $60; one of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, with 10 leaves of adverts (1913), at $32.

In an earlier sale were the following items of purely American interest, showing the still open door for enthusiasts: Allen's *Expedition under Captains Lewis and Clark to the Sources of the Missouri*, (2 vols, with maps; 1st, Philadelphia, 1814) $65; Schultz's *Travels through New York*, etc., with port, maps, etc., (New York, 1810), $40; Wilcocke's *History of Buenos Aires*, with plates and maps (1807), $20; and Keating's *Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River*, with vocabulary of Indian languages (2 vols, 1825), $20. Some interesting sales at Sotheby's will be dealt with in my next notes. The above prices are given in dollars at par.

BURTON, JUN.


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# BON VOYAGE

## *Foot-Loose With Unconventional Travellers*

BY ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

THERE have been few travellers more genuinely foot-loose than the late Alfred C. B. Fletcher, who, with his wife, was starting in quest of new adventures when the two went down in the *Vestris* disaster. Fletcher told the story of his early unconventional wanderings in *From Job to Job Around the World*. His posthumous book, *Keep Moving* (Laidlaw. $2.50), is the record of experiences in various parts of America, Europe, and the Far East between 1913 and 1921. Outstanding chapters of *Keep Moving* are those describing conditions of life in the occupied regions of Belgium and Northern France during the war, for Fletcher served two years with the C.R.B. (Commission for Relief in Belgium). The picture of the strange journey of the seven North-of-France men of the Commission through Germany bound for detention in the Black Forest until such time as any military information they might possess should lose its value, revives vivid memories in the mind of the present reviewer, who was one of Fletcher's six companions in that curious adventure.

Melville Chater's *Two Canoe Gypsies* (Brewer, Warren & Putnam. $3.50), is the sprightly account of an 800-mile canal voyage through Belgium, Brittany, Touraine, Gascony and Languedoc, in the sixteen-foot Canadian canoe, the *Nageoma*. The flavour of Mr. Chater's narrative is conveyed in a nutshell by his anecdote of the enterprising innkeeper discovered on the water front of Bordeaux. Leaving the dock Mr. Chater and his wife noted as a good landmark a waterside eating-house flying the Union Jack and displaying a sign-board that read "John Bull's Bar and Chop-house". Returning the next day the English establishment had entirely disappeared and in its place, under the tricolor, was the "Café et Brasserie de la France". The third day the Italian flag was flying over the spaghetti house "Trattoria Mussolini", and the fourth day there was a German flag above the "Rathskeller von Hindenburg". An affable policeman explained: "It all depends on the shipping, monsieur. When a British ship arrives the restaurant displays the British flag and the sign of 'John Bull's Bar'. When an Italian boat arrives the establishment becomes 'Trattoria Mussolini', and so on". The gendarme pointed to an American freighter headed up-stream, then he added: "*Voila!* Tonight the establishment becomes 'Bar and Chop Suey Parlour Oncle Sam' ".

Times have changed since Thackeray's *The Kickleburys on the Rhine* reflected general British reactions to the manner, customs, and institutions of "foreign parts". Nowadays the Briton, travelling and writing about it, seems to have adopted a policy of tolerant conciliation which some Americans might do well to follow. Here, for example, is John Gibbons's *Afoot in Italy* (Dutton. $2.50). Mr. Gibbons's book is dedicated to Il Duce, and the theme of his song, paraphrasing Laurence Sterne, is that under the new Fascism "they order this matter better in Italy". On foot,



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